

# **Freud, Lacan, and the Oedipus Complex**

Petrus Lodewikus van der Merwe



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Supervisors: Prof. P.I.M.M. Van Haute (Radboud University)

Dr. V. Roodt (Stellenbosch University)

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**Statement**

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**Abstract**

"Freud, Lacan, and the Oedipus Complex" examines the Oedipus complex as found in the writing of Sigmund Freud and re-evaluated in the works of Jacques Lacan. Lacan's critical reappraisal of the Oedipus complex is captured in his 1969-1971 Seminars, published as *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). This thesis examines Freud's overemphasis of the Oedipus complex, the myth of the primal horde and the consequent depiction of the father. Lacan doesn't dismiss the Oedipus complex completely, but treats it as a dream, and reinterprets it in light of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Lacan focuses on Freud's overemphasis on the father in both the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde and illustrates how Freud is protecting the image of the father by depicting him as strong, whereas clinical experience shows that the father can be weak and fallible.

### Opsomming

"Freud, Lacan, and the Oedipus Complex" ondersoek die Oedipus kompleks, soos beskryf in die werk van Sigmund Freud en die beskrywing daarvan in die werk van Jacques Lacan. Lacan se kritiese herevaluasie van die Oedipus kompleks verskyn in sy 1969-1971 Seminare, gepubliseer as *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). Die tesis studeer Freud se oorbeklemtoning van die Oedipus kompleks, die oer-miete en die rol van die vader, ten spyte van die ongerymdhede en kliniese tekortkominge in sy uitbeelding van die vader-figuur. Lacan verwerp nie die Oedipus kompleks ten volle nie, maar kontekstualiseer dit in terme van 'n droom en herinterpreteer dit in lig van Freud se *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Lacan fokus op Freud se oorbeklemtoning van die vader in beide die Oedipus kompleks en die oer-miete en illustreer hoe Freud die beeld van die vader probeer beskerm deur hom as sterk uit te beeld, veral wanneer kliniese ervaring wys dat die vader swak en feilbaar is.

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## **Introduction**

"Freud, Lacan, and the Oedipus complex" examines the Oedipus complex as it was introduced into psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud and subsequently reinterpreted by Jacques Lacan. The Oedipus complex is arguably the most misunderstood and misinterpreted aspect of psychoanalysis, and therefore calls for further elucidation. This thesis revolves around the question of Lacan's sudden critical evaluation of the Oedipus complex presented in his seminars during 1969-1971, captured in Seminar 17, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). It was during this time that Lacan became increasingly aware of the clinical shortcomings of the Oedipus complex, and consequently referred to it as unusable and Freud's dream.

This reading focuses on the Oedipus complex, far beyond the basic summary of the child's desire for the parent of the opposite sex, and the rivalry with the parent of the same sex. The focus of this thesis lies in Freud's emphasis on the figure of the strong, prohibiting father, and how this father plays a prominent role throughout Freud's writings. The depiction of this strong, prohibiting father seems to emanate from the death of Freud's own father, as depicted in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

The first chapter discusses the historical development of the Oedipus complex in Freud's oeuvre, and covers his writing spanning a period of over 40 years. This chapter presents a systematic overview of the Oedipus complex that starts with Freud's discussion on the death of his own father in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), including the murder of the primal father in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), discusses Dora and her father in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a), and presents the revised version of the myth of the primal horde in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Lacan's reading of the Oedipus complex also hinges on these three texts, and the pre-eminent position given to the father.

The second chapter focuses on Lacan's critical evaluation of the Oedipus complex. However, Lacan was initially a fervent supporter of the Oedipus complex, yet, suddenly started referring to it as unusable and called it Freud's dream. Instead of dismissing the Oedipus complex completely, Lacan argued that if it is in fact Freud's dream, then there must be an underlying structure and meaning to the Oedipus complex. This reaches an interesting *impasse*, namely, the difference and distinction between myths and dreams, whereby on the one hand, the Oedipus complex is an adaptation of the Sophoclean *Oedipus Rex* myth<sup>1</sup>, and on the other hand, the Oedipus complex is incorporated as Freud's dream. Lacan focuses on four of Freud's texts, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Lacan shows that the underlying theme in all four texts rests on the depiction of the father as all powerful. This raises the question as to why Freud fervently held onto the all powerful father figure. Freud's Oedipus complex reaches a contradiction between the Oedipal father (the strong, prohibiting father) against the weak fathers he encountered in his clinical practice. It is then suggested that Freud introduced *Totem and Taboo* to solve this inconsistency. The outcome being that Freud devised the myth of the primal horde as a way to save this image of the strong, prohibiting father. Therefore, even if the child doesn't have a strong, prohibiting father, he can always call on this primordial father. Yet, as Lacan showed, this strong, prohibiting father also happens to be the dead father. The discussion on the strong prohibiting father as the dead father is taken up in Section 2.4.1.

However, for Lacan, there remains a discrepancy between the treatment of the myth of the primal horde and the Oedipus complex. In the case of the myth of the primal horde, the father enjoys, and

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<sup>1</sup> Freud introduces Sophocles' tragic play *Oedipus Rex* in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). It is in Freud's (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams* that he expresses the idea of "being in love with the one parent and hating the other" (294). For Freud, Sophocles' tragic play, *Oedipus Rex* expresses this theme of the love with the one parent and the rivalry with the other. Oedipus unknowingly murdered his father, King Laius, and then married his mother, Jocaste. For Freud, this affirms the fulfilment of childhood wishes, which after puberty are repressed, yet retained in the unconscious.



his murder leads to the establishment of the law; whereas in the Oedipus complex, the law precedes the transgression. Instead of collapsing the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde as variations of the Sophoclean *Oedipus Rex*, Grigg (2006) proposes that the myth of the primal horde is Freud's reaction to Obsessional Neurosis, whereas the Oedipus complex is rather Freud's reaction towards Hysteria. Grigg (2006) suggests that a distinction be made between the Oedipus complex and myth of the primal horde, which is implemented throughout this thesis. Even though Grigg's distinction is unfounded and highly disputable, Grigg's structure is maintained throughout this thesis for the sake of consistency and clarity.

Two examples will be discussed to illustrate Lacan's adjustment to the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde. The first example focuses on the Oedipus complex as a variation of the Sophoclean Oedipal theme and presents the elements that Lacan highlighted. Lacan introduced the distinction between the actual father and the dead father. If Freud found initial inspiration in Sophocles' tragic play, *Oedipus Rex*, one can use Verdi's opera, *Don Carlo* (2010) to illustrate Lacan's distinction between the actual father and the dead father. Verdi's opera is based on Friedrich Schiller's play, *Don Carlos*, and is a variation of the Sophoclean tragedy with an added twist. In Verdi's opera, Don Carlo is said to be engaged to Elizabeth, the daughter of the King of France. Don Carlo, the son of the King of Spain, goes to France to meet Elizabeth in the forest of Fontainebleau. He reveals his identity and his feelings, which she reciprocates in the duet, *Di quale amor, di quanto ardour*. However, the terms of the peace agreement are changed and Elizabeth is betrothed to Don Carlo's father, King Phillip II. She reluctantly agrees to marry the King of Spain, since this will put an end to the war. They return to Spain and Don Carlo laments his loss. Elizabeth becomes Don Carlo's stepmother, which essentially renders her a forbidden object of his desire. This is still in line with the classical Freudian depiction of the Oedipus complex. Lacan's adjustments are illustrated by King Phillip II's vulnerability and doubts, most notably with regards to whether Elizabeth ever loved him at all. The notion of the dead father is

illustrated when the second and final act play out at the tomb of the late Emperor Charles V ('Carlo Quinto'), whose apparition features in Act 2 Scene 1, and again in the final act. The dead grandfather introduces an interesting dynamic: Emperor Charles V represents the dead father, whereas King Phillip II represents the actual father. The actual father always lives in the shadow of the dead father and has to live up to his reputation and esteem. The actual father has his own doubts and weaknesses, which he covers by calling unto the dead father, the primordial father, which is also what Lacan refers to as 'the title of father'. By loosening up the familial ties to the object of desire, Verdi is able to create a love-triangle between the son, the father and the stepmother. Freud initially tried to convey the sentiments of love for one parent and the rivalry with the parent of the same gender through the Oedipus complex, whereas Verdi's opera illustrates Lacan's reading by incorporating the son, the father and the dead grandfather.

The second example focuses further on Freud's overemphasis on the father, as found in the multiple award-winning film, *The King's Speech* (2010). This example showcases Lacan's discussion of Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) (in Section 2.4.1.) and its variation in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) (in Section 2.4.3.). The example deals with King George VI's debilitating stutter, against the backdrop of his impending coronation, Hitler and the Nazi party's rise to power in Germany, and the looming war. The film portrays the death of King George V on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1936, as well as the eldest son, King Edward VIII's abdication from the throne to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson. It is this underlying dynamic that illustrates Lacan's explanation of Freud's overemphasis on the position of the father. King George VI, with his debilitating stutter, was suddenly thrust into a position of great power and great responsibility. Yet, King George VI also had to live up to the reputation that comes with the title of being the King. To make matters worse, his elder brother was eloquent, confident, and charismatic. When King Edward VIII abdicated, there was increased pressure on his successor, as his stutter would create problems for the King with public speaking, and in turn, affect his public image and his image as King. King

George VI, with all his flaws, lack of self-confidence and self-belief, was thrust into the position of King. This is the same paradox that Lacan identified in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and his description of the father as all-powerful, whereas clinical experience has shown that the father can be weak, and flawed. Lacan's argument explains how the weak father can always call on the position of the primal father, as is argued in Section 2.4.1. However, what this movie also illustrates is Lacan's argument - as presented in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007) and discussed in Section 2.4.2. - that the father should be ferociously ignorant. The very existence of the figure of that all powerful father - as seen in the example of King George VI - is that the father should be ferociously ignorant of his own castration.<sup>2</sup> In *The King's Speech*, the overcoming of his stammer was facilitated by the treatment received from speech therapist, Lionel Logue. Yet Lacan's argument stresses two important aspects. Firstly, that the overcoming of his stutter and lack of confidence was facilitated by the title and position of King. Secondly, Lacan's argument shows that *The King's Speech* brings forth an element that was already present, that the King from the very beginning is fallible and flawed. In other words, that he is from the outset castrated.

It should be noted with the examples mentioned above, that the Oedipal theme continually recurs in movies, theatre, literature, etc. However, many will argue that its recurrence validates the Sophoclean myth, yet, Freud's depiction of the Oedipus complex hinges on the unconscious repetition of the Oedipal theme. Therefore, Freud's depiction of the Oedipus complex remains relevant, since not all incorporations of the Oedipal theme are done consciously. The Oedipal theme speaks volumes of Sophocles' genius, but it cannot be detached from Freud's work.

This is essentially Lacan's critique of Freud's overemphasis of the father, as presented in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and *Moses and*

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of ferocious ignorance will be discussed at greater length in section 2.4.3.

*Monotheism* (1939). Lacan's critique of the Oedipus complex focuses on this depiction of the figure of the all powerful father, and how this depiction is unusable in a clinical setting. Even despite the failing of the Oedipus complex in a clinical setting, Freud still holds onto this image and depiction of the father. Lacan argued that this all powerful depiction of the father is Freud's dream and consequently has to be interpreted as such. This is what Lacan sets out to do in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007).

## **Chapter 1**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Freud's Oedipus complex has been a contemptuous notion within psychology and philosophy alike. This chapter focuses on presenting a historical overview of the development of the Oedipus complex within Freud's writing that spans 40 years. The Oedipus concept was developed over the course of Freud's career and was incorporated at different stages. The Oedipus complex shouldn't be treated as an umbrella concept, but rather viewed within the context that Freud introduced and described the Oedipus complex.

The historical development of the Oedipus complex will be discussed in five parts. The first part focuses on Freud's writing between 1900 and 1909, which, however, has minimal reference to the Oedipus complex, as the references to the Oedipus complex were only added in Freud's later revisions.<sup>3</sup> The importance of this period was that Freud became increasingly aware of the role of the father, especially after the death of his own father, as described in the preface of the second edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The second part focuses on *Totem and Taboo*, published in 1913, which introduces the discussion of the murder of the father of the primal horde<sup>4</sup>, as a continuation of his presentation on obsessional neurosis, as discussed in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (1909a), and *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis ('Ratman')* (1909b). The third part focuses on Freud's writing between 1923 and 1925 when Freud predominantly focused on the Oedipus complex, as it is more commonly known today; the rivalry between the son and the father for the affection of the mother. The fourth part focuses on the Dora case-study, which was originally

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the English translation of *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* was first published in 1901 and subsequently reworked in 1905, 1909, 1924, 1932, and 1942; however, the English translation is, to quote the editor, "the present translation is a corrected version of the one published in 1925" (Freud, 1905a:3).

<sup>4</sup> The myth of the primal horde for Freud is representational of the origins of society, and this father is the all powerful father who possesses all the women. It is out of jealousy and rivalry with the father that the sons band together and murder him.

written in 1901 and published in 1905 as *Fragment of the Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a). There are two reasons for incorporating the Dora case study this late in the chapter. Firstly, the English translation of the Dora case study is the 1925 version with all the subsequent adjustments added to the German texts over the years. Secondly, this placement will help the argument's chronological development. This is also the order in which the texts will be dealt with in Lacan's reading in Chapter 2. The fifth part focuses on *Moses and Monotheism*, published in 1939. *Moses and Monotheism* is a continuation of *Totem and Taboo* in which Freud elaborated on religion, how religion arose from the murder of the father of the primal horde, explaining the transition from Judaism to Christianity, and how both religions differ in their treatment of the murder of the father of the primal horde.

Discussing each article independently will prove valuable later on, as will be seen in Russell Grigg's (2006) description of the Oedipus complex. His argument emphasizes an important distinction between the father of the primal horde and the father of the Oedipus complex. Grigg writes; "On this view the Oedipus complex would be the myth that Freud creates in response to the clinic of hysteria; the myth of the primal-horde father of *Totem and Taboo* his response to the clinic of obsessional neurosis" (62). The separation between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde is difficult to maintain, as there are passages in Freud's writing that suggest that the two are synonymous, and there are moments where one can clearly distinguish between the two. For example, one can clearly discern between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), yet, Freud collapses this distinction in *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* (1924). Despite the distinction between Obsessional Neurosis and Hysteria being inconclusive and highly disputable<sup>5</sup>, this thesis still relies greatly on Grigg's article for the sake of clarity and consistency, especially as far as Lacan's reading is concerned in Chapter 2.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Van Haute & Geyskens (2010)

Dora is also discussed in section 1.6., even though its content is more applicable to section 1.3. Discussing Dora in section 1.6. is necessary for clarity and simplicity, since discussing the Dora case study later on helps keep the pertinent issues of the Oedipus complex together. Since section 1.5 focuses on texts all written in the 1920s, the Oedipus complex is discussed in light of the following texts: *The Ego and the Id* (1923), *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* (1924), and *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes* (1925). These articles give the most generally known depictions of the Oedipus complex. In light of these depictions of the Oedipus complex, we will return to the Dora case-study to focus on Freud's attempt at a portrayal of female sexuality.

This entire chapter presents a systematic overview of the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde, starting with the death of Freud's father, the subsequent question as to the role of the father, and the conceptualization around the question, *what is the father?*

## **1.2. Freud's Historical Development of the Oedipus Complex**

The main emphasis of this chapter is to highlight the historical development of the Oedipus complex, as well as how it fits into the larger corpus of Freud's work. The passages selected in Freud's work will be presented in a chronological order, but what proves problematic is that Freud continually revised his works (in several cases a few times) after publication. Since Freud was continually revising his previous publications, the Oedipus complex was subsequently inscribed in his earlier work. However, as will be demonstrated, the Oedipus complex is only a feature of the latter writings of Freud. For example, the case study presented in Freud's *Fragment of the Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a) was originally written in 1901, but published in 1905. The references to the Oedipus complex are problematic, since the final revision was

only published in 1925, and these comments were only added to the Dora case study later in the 1925 edition.<sup>6</sup>

This section will attempt to remain true to the chronological development of the Oedipus complex. The texts that attention will be drawn to are, to mention a few, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a), *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* ('Ratman') (1909b), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Ego and the Id* (1923), *Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* (1924), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

### 1.3. From Interpretation of Dreams to Ratman

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) is another example of a text Freud revised frequently. Freud continually added excerpts, which complicates tracing a chronological development. However, the Strachey translations do include, in the footnotes, the year that the additions were made or effaced from the text. The *Interpretation of Dreams*' German editions were revised in 1909, 1911, 1914, 1919, 1922, 1925, and 1930. This accounts for two relevant notions to this thesis. First, that the account of the *Interpretation of Dreams* used is the 1930 edition with all the revisions and additions is treated as the 1900 edition. Second, the Oedipus complex<sup>7</sup> was only added in later revisions, beginning in 1910. This is illustrated through the editor's note: "The actual term 'Oedipus complex' seems to have been first used by Freud in his published writing in the first of his 'Contributions to the Psychology of Love' (1910)" (Freud, 1900, 263n2). It was however in the second edition of *Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1909, which provides us with an invaluable link in understanding the development of the Oedipus complex in Freud's work. Freud (1900) wrote:

It was, I found a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death - that is to say, to the most important

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<sup>6</sup> Freud first spoke of the Oedipus complex in 1910. Freud did incorporate the Oedipus legend in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), but the Oedipus complex, as it is known today, only features in Freud's writings after 1910. See the editors note in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900, 263n2).

<sup>7</sup> Freud does refer to the Oedipus legend prior to 1910, but uses 'Oedipus complex' from 1910 onwards.



event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life. Having discovered that this was so, I felt unable to obliterate the traces of the experience. (xxvi)

Freud coming to terms with, the death of his father highlights two important notions. First, Freud is dealing with the death of his father<sup>8</sup>, and second, Freud is conceptualizing the question, "What is the father?", which includes the question as to the role of the father<sup>9</sup>.

After *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud only published again in 1905 with two major texts, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a) and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905b). These texts will be discussed in greater detail in Section 1.6, since Freud continually revised his texts. The Dora case study will be discussed in light of *The Ego and the ID* (1923) as it presents a discussion of the Oedipus complex that Freud reinscribes in the Dora case study, originally written in 1901 and published in 1905. Therefore, the introduction of the Oedipus complex into the case of Dora occurs in the 1925 edition, following Freud's publication of *The Ego and the Id* (1923), *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* (1924), and *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes* (1925)<sup>10</sup>. This explains why Dora is treated as a 1925 text, in order to clarify the chronological development of the Oedipus complex, especially in light of Freud's articles published in the mid 1920s.

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<sup>8</sup> Ernest Jones (1953) writes, to quote him at length; "It was in the previous October that Freud's father had died. In thanking Fliess for his condolence he wrote: 'By one of the dark ways behind the official consciousness my father's death has affected me profoundly. I had treasured him highly and had understood him exactly. With his peculiar mixture of deep wisdom and fantastic lightness he had meant very much in my life. He had passed his time when he died, but inside me the occasion of his death has re-awakened all my early feelings. Now I feel quite uprooted.' Freud has told us that it was this experience that led him to write *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)" (356).

<sup>9</sup> A third factor that is relevant, that will be discussed in the second chapter in Lacan's reading, is found in Lévi-Strauss' (1955) discussion of the Oedipus complex. He introduces the notion of the Oedipus complex as a result of Freud posing the question, *How is one born from two?* This also implies the question, *What are sexual relations?*

<sup>10</sup> These three texts are discussed in greater length in Section 1.5.

Yet, it was in 1909 that Freud still focused on the father, especially following the death of his own father as discussed in the preface to the second edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Freud introduces the notion of the Father complex in *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis ('Ratman')* (1909b). Among the many interesting and curious aspects of the Ratman, specific attention will be given to the relationship between the Ratman and his father, as well as how Freud conceives of its consequences. It was during the Ratman's adolescence that he did not practice any masturbation, but there was, however, a sudden onset of masturbation. Freud noticed that this "impulsion towards masturbatory activities came over him in his twenty-first year, shortly after his father's death" (203). Freud elaborated on the significance of the connection between the death of the father, and the sudden onset of masturbation.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the Ratman, Freud highlighted that the 'sexual awakening' of the Ratman flourished after his father's death. To quote Freud; "Several years after his father's death, the first time he experienced the pleasurable sensations of copulation, an idea sprang into his mind: 'This is glorious! One might murder one's father for this!'" (201). The impetus for Freud fell on "a prohibition and the defiance of a command" (204), whereby the masturbation can be explained in light of the prohibition against masturbation and the accompanying feelings that came with the defiance of this prohibition. Freud's initial explanation focuses on the Ratman, who, when he was under the age of six, had been castigated by his father for some sexual misdemeanour relating to masturbation. Freud's hypothesis therefore states that there were two consequences of the castigation from the father, first, that it put an end to the masturbation, but second, and more importantly, "it had left behind it an ineradicable grudge against his father and had established him for all time in his role of an interferer with the patient's sexual enjoyment" (205). Yet at the same time, there are ambiguous feelings towards the father, illustrated when Freud wrote; "In reply to a question he gave me an

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<sup>11</sup> Freud does not only focus on masturbation, but masturbation does seem a dominant theme, not only in the Ratman, but also in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy ('Little Hans')* (1909a:7-8), as well as in *Totem and Taboo* (1913:126-132).

example of these fears: 'for instance, *that my father might die*'" (162). Therefore, Freud recognized two problematic dispositions of the Ratman; first, between wishing the death of the father<sup>12</sup> and the fear of losing the father. Second, the ambiguous connection Freud established between the Ratman's desire and the father as interferer or blockade of this desire. This played a greater part in Freud's description of *Totem and Taboo* (1913).

#### 1.4. Totem and Taboo

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) develops the two ideas mentioned in the Ratman: the ambivalent feelings towards the father (that is captured in the father-complex) and the depiction of the father as the interferer of desire. Freud adds another component in *Totem and Taboo* with the introduction of 'the myth of the murder of the primal father' (hereafter referred to as the 'myth of the primal horde'). The discussion on *Totem and Taboo* will consist of these three parts: the ambivalence towards the father, the father as the interferer of desire in the Ratman, and *Totem and Taboo* as an elaboration on the murder of the primal father.

The first part consists of the discussion on the ambivalence towards the father in *Totem and Taboo* and how his depiction goes hand in hand with the father-complex. Freud (1913) writes on the connection between ambiguous emotions towards the father and the father complex: "I have already hinted at the fact that the child's complex emotions towards his father - the father complex - has a bearing on the subject, and I may add that more information on the early history of the kinship would throw a decisive light on it" (51). Freud mentions three examples, i.e. the nine-year-old boy, Little Árpád, and Little Hans. However, the mention of the Oedipus complex needs to be discussed. In Freud's presentation there are several references towards the Oedipus complex, which, when you look at the examples independently, do not fit the criteria of the Oedipus

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<sup>12</sup> Freud identifies the Ratman's "favourite phantasy that his father was still alive and might at any moment reappear" (1910: 204). This also emphasizes the ambivalence of the Ratman towards his father.

complex, but are closer aligned to the depiction of the primal father. In other words, that there are two depictions, one being the Oedipus complex and the other being the explanation of the primal father. The Oedipus complex features strongly in Freud's later work, which will be discussed at great length. However, as will be argued, the three examples are first introduced to elucidate the ambivalent feelings towards the father, and was then later Oedipalized. All three examples include an ambivalent attitude towards the father as well as a fear of reproach or castigation from the father connected to masturbatory acts. All three examples function without any reference to the mother, which is the most important indication of the Oedipus complex. Even with plenty of opportunity to develop an Oedipal theme, Freud concludes throughout that the examples illustrate ambivalent feelings towards the father and subsequent identification with the father.

The first example was of the nine-year-old boy who, at the age of four, had a dog-phobia which was connected with a fear of reproach from his father's insistence that the boy not masturbate. It is explained that the nine-year-old boy was not scared of the dog, but scared of the retribution of the father in light of disobeying the demand not to masturbate. This fear of the father is consequently displaced onto dogs. (Freud, 1913:128)

The second example was of Little Árpád who, at the age of two and a half, tried to urinate into a fowl-house, where he or his penis was consequently pecked at. Later on, Little Árpád, developed an infatuation with fowl that was resembled in the toys he collected and the songs that he sung that all mentioned fowls. The importance of this example is emphasized when Freud writes; "His attitude towards his totem animal was superlatively ambivalent: he showed both hatred and love to an extravagant degree" (130). Freud's interest in Little Árpád was because of this ambivalent feelings towards the totemic animal, which Freud illustrates in what he called Little Árpád's favourite game:

His favourite game was playing slaughtering fowls. 'The slaughtering of poultry was a regular festival for him. He

would dance round the animals' bodies for hours at a time in a state of intense excitement'. But afterwards he would kiss and stroke the slaughtered animal or would clean and caress the toy fowls that he had himself ill-treated. (Freud, 1913:130; quoting Ferenczi, 1913:246)

Freud then entrenches the connection between the fowl and his father. The conclusion that Freud emphasizes with this example, to quote Freud at length: "At the moment *I will only emphasize two features* in it which offer valuable points of agreement with totemism: the boy's complete identification with his totem animal and his ambivalent emotional attitude to it" (131, my italics). Freud emphasizes the two features of this example, even though there is a reference to what could be construed as an Oedipal<sup>13</sup> theme. Freud does not pick up on this Oedipal theme yet, or discusses the Oedipal theme as the central feature of this example and instead focuses on the two features of the complete identification with the totemic animal and the emotional ambivalence.

The third example presents more difficulty, as Freud's discussion on Little Hans is rife with Oedipal references. Little Hans was introduced in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (1909a) several years prior to the publication of *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Little Hans had a fear of horses and refused to go outside in the street. He had a fear that the horses would come into his room and bite him. The conclusion Freud draws from this was, to quote Freud at length, focuses on the two themes:

The child finds relief from the conflict arising out of this double-sided, this ambivalent emotional attitude towards his father by displacing his hostile and fearful feelings on to a *substitute* for his father. The displacement cannot, however, bring the conflict to an end, it cannot effect a clear-cut severance between the affectionate and the hostile feelings.

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<sup>13</sup> Freud quotes Ferenczi wherein his depiction one can identify a clear Oedipal reference: "He showed that he had formed his own choice of sexual objects on the model of life in the hen-run, for he said one day to the neighbour's wife, 'I'll marry you and your sister and my three cousins and the cook; no, not the cook, I'll marry my mother instead'" (Freud, 1913:131, quoting Ferenczi, 1913:252).

On the contrary, the conflict is resumed in the relation to the object on to which the displacement has been made: the ambivalence is extended to *it*. (129, his emphasis)

However, the extensive Oedipal references towards the example of Little Hans need to be dealt with. Little Hans did concede to Freud's observations that he perceived his father as a competitor for the favours of his mother<sup>14</sup>. However, to support the claims that the Oedipal theme was not yet of such significance in Freud's work, he immediately writes; "The new fact that we have learnt from the analysis of 'little Hans' - a fact with an important bearing upon totemism - is that in such circumstances children displace some of their feelings from their father on to an animal" (129).

Therefore, in the three examples - with plenty of opportunity to delve into the Oedipal contents - Freud continually refers back to the two issues of identification with the father as well as ambivalent emotions towards the father. This is also a logical continuation of the two articles presented in 1909, *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* ('Little Hans') (1909a) and *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* ('Ratman') (1909b), from which Freud develops his approach around the child's relationship with the father as well as the ambivalent emotions towards the father. *Totem and Taboo* can then consequently be described as a continuation of this line of thought. The Oedipus complex still does not feature as emphatically in Freud's work in 1913, even if one can identify strong Oedipal overtones in his examples.

The second part of *Totem and Taboo* focuses on the depiction of the father as interferer of desire. This is also clear in the three examples discussed above, in as much as the father is an obstacle to desire. Without relapsing into an Oedipal discussion whereby the mother is seen as the object of desire. Freud develops this notion in greater detail later on, which becomes a fundamental part of the

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<sup>14</sup> Freud even acknowledges the Oedipal contents of Little Hans when he writes; "Thus he was situated in the typical attitude of a male child towards his parents to which we have given the name of the 'Oedipus complex' and which we regard in general as the nuclear complex of the neurosis" (129).

Oedipus complex (which will be discussed later on). Freud's initial fascination with the father as the interferer with desire is initially discussed in light of the consequences of the father's reproach to masturbatory activities in all four examples mentioned thus far, of Ratman, Little Hans, Little Árpád, and the nine-year-old boy.

In the case of the Ratman, it was only after the father's death that there was excessive masturbation. In the example of the nine-year-old boy whose fear of his father was displaced on to dogs<sup>15</sup>. The example of Little Árpád is significant for three reasons, first the connection between a threat over masturbation<sup>16</sup>, his ambivalent emotional attitude towards his father, and how he displaced this fear and ambivalence onto a totem animal. The example of Little Hans is the only exception to the three examples mentioned in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), in as much as Freud acknowledges an Oedipal theme<sup>17</sup>, but as has been argued, Freud is more interested in highlighting how Little Hans identified with the totem animal, and how Little Hans' fear of being bitten by horses was internalized and acted out<sup>18</sup>. However, in the case study of Little Hans, it was in fact his mother who had threatened him if he continued to play with his penis.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the father is still seen as a primary figure in the example, as his fear of the horse biting him<sup>20</sup> was a fear of reprisal or punishment.

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<sup>15</sup> Freud (1913) makes this link explicit when he writes; "'I won't masturbate' - was directed to his father, who had forbidden him to masturbate" (128).

<sup>16</sup> Freud (1913) writes; "He was very generous in threatening other people with castration, just as he himself had been threatened with it for his masturbatory activities" (131).

<sup>17</sup> Freud (1913) denied that there was an Oedipal theme present in the example of Little Árpád, illustrated when he writes; "It is true that in the case of little Árpád *his totemic interests did not arise in direct relation with his Oedipus complex but on the basis of its narcissistic precondition, the fear of castration*" (130, my emphasis)

<sup>18</sup> The internalizing and acting out is expressed when Freud (1909a) writes; "Thus he was the horse, and bit his father, and in this way was identifying himself with his father" (52).

<sup>19</sup> Freud (1909a) depicts the mother and not the father as the interferer: "When he was three and a half his mother found him with his hand on his penis. She threatened him in these words, 'If you do that, I shall send for Dr. A. to cut off your widdler. And then what'll you widdle with?'" (7-8).

<sup>20</sup> Freud introduces the concept of biting in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) as a form of punishment: "He [Little Hans] expressed a fear that the horse would come into his room and bite him; and it turned out that this must be the punishment for a wish that the horse might fall down (that is, die)" (128).

Freud deduced that the horse was the totem animal for the father<sup>21</sup> which reaffirms the position of the father as the interferer with desire, even if it was the mother that had explicitly stated the threat. The depiction of the father as interferer with desire is clear in all the examples, and will play an important part in the depiction of the murder of the primal father.

The third part of the book is an accumulation of the first two parts, which Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) ties together in the murder of the primal father. In the editor's note, it is identified that the importance of the hypothesis of the primal horde and the killing of the primal father is an elaboration on Freud's theory from which he traces "almost the whole of later social and cultural institutions" (xi). For Freud, it all starts with the totem meal, wherein the clan celebrates the ceremonial occasion by devouring the totem animal that was slaughtered and devoured raw ("blood, flesh and bones" (140)). The ceremony had a dress code whereby the clansmen would dress up in the likeness of the totem animal and imitated it through the sounds and movement it made. The important rite, as Freud identified it, was: "Each man is conscious that he is performing an act forbidden to the individual and justifiable only through the participation of the whole clan; nor may anyone absent himself from the killing and the meal" (140). After the ceremony, there would be a mourning and lamentation which was obligatory that is also a consequence of a fear of retribution. The value of the ceremony in which the totem animal was consumed reinforces their identification with the totem animal, and also with one another. It is for the following reason that the clansmen have more in common with the examples mentioned above. Freud concludes, to quote him at length:

Psycho-analysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father; and this tallies with the contradictory fact that, though the killing of the animal is as a rule forbidden, yet its killing is a festive occasion - with the fact that it is killed and yet mourned. The

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<sup>21</sup> Freud (1909a) establishes the connection between the horse and the father, "Thus he was the horse, and bit his father, and in this way was identifying himself with his father" (52).



ambivalent emotional attitude, which to this day characterizes the father-complex in our children and which often persists into adult life, seem to extend to the totem animal in its capacity as a substitute for the father. (141)

Freud then turns his attention to Darwin's explanation for the earliest state of human society, yet Freud criticizes Darwin for the absence of totemism in his primal horde, but as Freud summarizes, "All we find there is a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up" (141). The depiction of the father of the primal horde is a feared and envied model for each of the brothers. Darwin's explanation<sup>22</sup> revolves around the brothers who had been exiled bonded together, and subsequently murdered their father, which brought an end to his patriarchal rule, which also includes the demise of the patriarchal horde. For Freud it is significant that they banded together instead of challenging his authority individually. Freud takes Darwin's explanation one step further by introducing the totem animal and the slaughtering of the totem animal with all the festivities that ensued. Freud includes all the elements in the ceremonial occasion, such as the identification with the totem animal, the ensuing mourning, and how the ceremony is followed by excessive gratification<sup>23</sup>. Freud consequently compares the clansmen to his neurotic patients (the four examples mentioned, i.e. Little Hans, Little Árpád, Ratman, and the nine-year-old boy) and finds a commonality, in as much as, Freud writes; "They [both the clansmen and the neurotics] hated their father, who presented such a formidable obstacle to their craving for power and their sexual desires; but they loved and admired him too" (143). Freud identifies that the logical consequences of the murder of the father would be that they could put an end to their hatred, and at the same time break free from his patriarchal rule. They would initially be

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<sup>22</sup> Freud (1913) summarized Darwin's explanation as follow, "One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde" (141).

<sup>23</sup> Freud (1913) follows the ceremonies up with excessive indulgences, which were encouraged, and part and parcel of the ceremony: "But the mourning is followed by demonstrations of festive rejoicing: every instinct is unfettered and there is licence for every kind of gratification" (140)

elated, but this would give rise to guilt - "a sense of guilt made its appearance" (143) - and as a consequence, would institute two laws. The first law was around the protection and sanctity of the totem animal, and the second law prohibited incest. The sanctity of the totem animal is founded as an emotional response to the inability to undo the murder of the father, whereas the second law indicates to Freud that the sons still had a rivalry with one another with regards to the women<sup>24</sup>. Freud hypothesises that the collapse of the patriarchal society following the murder of the father would lead to a society of all against all, which is an untenable situation. The outcome, writes Freud, is:

Thus the brothers had no alternative, if they were to live together, but - not, perhaps until they had passed through the many dangerous crises - to institute the law against incest, by which they all alike renounced the women whom they desired and who had been their chief motive for despatching their father. (144)

This leads to three interesting points of discussion, first, the consequences for the development of religion, second, the consequences of the introduction of guilt, and third, how this all applies to an Oedipal schema. Freud's description of religion in relation to the murder of the primal father will not be discussed in great detail here, but this still plays a large part in the importance of *Totem and Taboo* (1913)<sup>25</sup>. Freud, however, does take up the discussion on religion again in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

The second consequence of the murder of the father is the introduction of guilt within a wider context. The comparison between the neurotic<sup>26</sup> and the clansmen also revolves around their guilt and

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<sup>24</sup> Freud (1913) describes the extent of their identification with the father, which is also a source of tension amongst the brothers: "Each of them would have wished, like his father, to have all the women to himself" (144).

<sup>25</sup> Freud (1913) establishes the link between the murder of the primal father and the God: "There can be no doubt that in the Christian myth the original sin was one against God the Father. If, however, Christ redeemed mankind from the burden of original sin by the sacrifice of his own life, we are driven to conclude that the sin was a murder" (154)

<sup>26</sup> Freud (1913) writes, "It is only neurotics whose mourning for the loss of those dear to them is still troubled by obsessive self-reproaches - the

subsequent self-reproaches that arise from the ambivalent emotional attitude towards that father. According to Freud, this guilt<sup>27</sup> is irrespective of whether the guilt following the murder of the father was an unconscious thought or an (actual) intentional deed. Freud remains critical of this position, as there would be several assumptions underlying his argument, such as the possibility of an underlying guilt that stretches across generations. Freud proceeds to attempt to defend this position with the introduction of the notion of a 'collective mind', but this is also an unnecessary move, since the impetus falls on the psychical realities, evidenced when Freud (1913) writes; "What lie behind the sense of guilt of neurotics are always *psychical* realities and never *factual* ones" (159, his italics). It is here that Freud can defend his hypothesis of the murder of the primal horde even if it didn't physically happen. "Accordingly the mere hostile *impulse* against the father, the mere existence of a wishful *phantasy* of killing and devouring him, would have been enough to produce the moral reaction that created totemism and taboo" (159-60, his italics).

The third consequence of the murder of the father is the applicability of *Totem and Taboo* (1913) to an Oedipal schema. There are two passages of interest in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) that are contradictory and need explanation. As has already been argued, even though there is plenty of opportunity for an Oedipalization of the examples, Freud steers clear of the Oedipus complex, and instead focuses on the identification and ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father. Yet, there are still passages with *Totem and Taboo* that reference the Oedipus complex that need to be discussed or at least addressed. Freud writes, "At the conclusion, then, of this exceedingly condensed inquiry, I should like to insist that its outcome shows that the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex" (156). The passage on its own

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secret of which is revealed by psycho-analysis as the old emotional ambivalence" (66).

<sup>27</sup> Freud (1913) writes on the inevitable outcome of guilt as a consequence, regardless of whether the murder of the father was actually happening, or even subconsciously manifesting; "Nevertheless, *his sense of guilt has a justification*: it is founded on the intense and frequent death-wishes against his fellows which are unconsciously at work in him" (87, my italics).

suggests that Freud links the origins of the Totemic laws to the Oedipus complex. Yet, at the same time, there is minimal reference to the Oedipus complex, and even in the opportunities in which Freud can explore the connection of the three examples further, as discussed earlier, Freud still continues to emphasize the three important themes present in the examples, namely, the ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father, identification with the father, and how the father is an interferer with desire. Yet, this conclusion brings the Oedipus complex to the fore in a way that has not been clear throughout the rest of the text. Earlier in the text completely undermining the sentiments of the Oedipus complex as the 'beginnings of religion, morals, society, and art', Freud writes: "They thus created out of their filial sense of guilt these two fundamental taboos of totemism, which for that very reason *inevitably corresponded* to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex" (143, my emphasis). This passage explicitly refers to the corresponding features of the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde, as well as the murder of the father of the primal horde. This means that the myth is not the same as the Oedipus complex. Freud is still not fully committed to the Oedipus complex, nor fully invested in developing the Oedipus complex yet, but the significance of *Totem and Taboo* is the increased value being ascribed to Freud's description and depiction of the father. The important notion that *Totem and Taboo* is presenting is, to quote Freud, "man's relation to his father" (157)<sup>28</sup>.

The significance of *Totem and Taboo* in terms of Freud's development of the Oedipus complex is undeniable, yet, Freud's main focus and emphasis is still not solely on the Oedipus complex, which only comes to fruition in his later works. There is a large jump between *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Yet Freud only focused emphatically on the Oedipus complex between 1923 and 1925.

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<sup>28</sup> The full quotation goes as follow; "This is in complete agreement with the psycho-analytic finding that the same complex constitutes the nucleus of all neuroses, so far as our present knowledge goes. It seems to me a most surprising discovery that the problems of social psychology, too, should prove soluble on the basis of one single concrete point - man's relation to his father" (Freud, 1913:157).

### 1.5. Between The Ego and the Id and Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes

The third distinctive movement in the development of the Oedipus complex that this paper will focus on in Freud's development of the Oedipus complex is his writings between 1923 and 1925. There is a 10-year leap between *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *The Ego and the ID* (1923), but the focus on this paper is more specifically on the development of the Oedipus complex, which Freud only really took up again in *The Ego and the Id*<sup>29</sup>.

*The Ego and the ID* (1923) is a very important and significant text in Freud's oeuvre that includes a description of the workings of the mind in terms of the ego, the id, and the super-ego. Yet the *Ego and the Id* also contains a description of the Oedipus complex that presents the depiction most commonly used to explain the Oedipus complex in undergraduate courses. The problem with a simplification of the Oedipus complex is that it subverts all the facets of what Freud tries to explain in a unified presentation through the Oedipus complex<sup>30</sup>.

Freud (1923) describes the Oedipus complex as follow:

At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. (31-2)

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<sup>29</sup> For more information on this era, detailing the progression from *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914) to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), see Van der Merwe (2010).

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Lacan elaborates on the different facets of the Oedipus complex in his earlier writings, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Freud's depiction of the Oedipus complex quoted above follows the developmental approach presented in *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914), specifically that Freud uses terms such as object-cathexis and object-choice. These two terms gain significance in Freud's distinction between the two different types of attachment. Freud didn't abandon a biological approach, but changed his attention towards the conditions in early childhood. The impetus lies in the relationship between the child and the primary caregiver<sup>31</sup>. Freud introduces two types of attachment, namely the narcissistic type and the anaclitic type [*Anlehnungstypus*]. The difference between the two can be summarized as the focus of libido in terms of inside and outside. In the anaclitic attachment, libido is focused onto the primary caregivers [outside], whereas in the narcissistic type, libido is focussed on the self [inside]. The outcome is, as Freud writes:

A person may love: -

(1) According to the narcissistic type:

- a. What he himself is (i.e. himself),
- b. What he himself was,
- c. What he himself would like to be,
- d. Someone who was once part of himself.

(2) According to the anaclitic (attachment) type:

- a. The woman who feeds him,
- b. The man who protects him,
- c. And the succession of substitutes who take their place.

(90)

Freud consequently moves away from attachment within a biological frame, but focuses on describing attachment in terms of development - specifically sexual development. It is through the feeding and caring of the child that certain auto-erotic zones are inevitably stimulated which leads to the primary caregiver being the child's

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<sup>31</sup> The usage of the primary caregiver over parent frees up the developmental model from a biological description in two important ways, first by including the mother in the holistic sense rather than focusing on the biological mother or father, and second, by distancing from a genetic overvaluation.

earliest sexual object<sup>32</sup>. However, for Freud, the relationship between the child and the primary caregiver includes more than just the feeding, protecting and nurturing of the child. The position of the primary caregiver is suddenly raised in Freud's writing to a whole other level<sup>33</sup>. The Oedipus complex as Freud envisages it in *The Ego and the ID* includes both parents, whereas the myth of the primal horde focused more specifically on the father. It is through the gratification of feeding, caring and nurturing that the mother's role is elevated.

To return to *The Ego and the ID*, it is when the child perceives the father as an obstacle that Freud pinpoints his ambivalent attitude towards him. It is in the confrontation with the father that Freud recognizes and identifies the consequences of the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, which are described as follow:

Along with the demolition of the Oedipus complex, the boy's object-cathexis of his mother must be given up. Its place may be filled by one of two things: either an identification with his mother or an intensification of his identification with his father. (32)

Freud then connects the super-ego with the Oedipus complex, in which the super-ego helps to illustrate how the Oedipus complex also fulfils a similar position as that of *Totem and Taboo* (1913): how religion, morality and a social sense is instilled.<sup>34</sup> However, there

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<sup>32</sup> Freud (1914) writes: "The first auto-erotic sexual gratifications are experiences in connection with vital functions in the service of self-preservation. The sexual instincts are at the outset supported upon the ego-instincts; only later do they become independent of these, and even then do we have an indication of that original dependence in the fact that those persons who have to do with the feeding, care, and protection of the child become his earliest sexual objects: in the first instance the mother" (p. 87).

<sup>33</sup> Freud (1914) affirms the new position of the parent when he writes; "Moreover, [the parents] are inclined to suspend in the child's favour the operation of all those cultural acquisitions which their own narcissism has been forced to respect, and to renew on his behalf the claims to privileges which were long ago given up by themselves" (91)

<sup>34</sup> Freud (1923) writes; "Religion, morality, and a social sense - the chief elements in the higher side of man - were originally one and the same thing. According to the hypothesis which I put forward in *Totem and Taboo* they were acquired phylogenetically out of the father-complex: religion and moral restraint through the process of mastering the Oedipus complex

is marked difference in the way that the myth of the primal father (presented in *Totem and Taboo*) and the Oedipus complex achieves this goal. In the myth of the primal father, it is after the murder of the father that the guilt-ridden sons avoid the complete collapse of the patriarchal system and continue to enforce the rules of the totem. Freud emphasizes the notion of guilt, even if they didn't murder the father, their ambivalent emotional attitude towards him does account for guilt without the [actual] deed. In the Oedipus complex, it is through the identification with the father and the creation of the ego-ideal (*ich-ideal*) that the super-ego takes hold.<sup>35</sup> It seems that Freud is placing the Oedipus complex as a central developmental moment: "The super-ego, according to our hypothesis, actually originated from the experiences that led to totemism" (38). This also suggests that the Oedipus complex is separate from the father-complex presented in *Totem and Taboo*, but more importantly, since this provides an alternative context for the Oedipus complex, that the super-ego is an important milestone that arises from the conflict between the internal world and the external world<sup>36</sup>. The Id relates to the internal world, and the super-ego to the external world. The classical description of the Oedipus complex illustrates that the desire for the mother is depicted within the id, whereas the super-ego is then represented by the external law that prevents the completion of this desire. However, it should also be stated that Freud is also trying to explain the connection between the ego, the id and the super-ego, and consequently, the Oedipus complex is described difficultly in *The Ego and the ID*. What most take away from Freud's description is the affirmation of the relationship between the child and the primary caregivers, the satisfaction of auto-erotic zones leads towards the satisfaction of

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itself, and social feeling through the necessity for overcoming the rivalry that then remained between the members of the younger generation" (37).

<sup>35</sup> Freud (1923) writes about the relationship between the ego-ideal and the Oedipus complex; "The ego-ideal is therefore the heir of the Oedipus complex, and thus it is also the expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id. By setting up this ego-ideal, the ego has mastered the Oedipus complex and at the same time placed itself in the subjection to the id" (36). For a full explanation of the *ideal-ich* and the *ich-ideal*, see Van der Merwe (2010)

<sup>36</sup> "Conflicts between the ego and the ideal will, as we are now prepared to find, ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is psychical, between the external world and the internal world" (Freud, 1923:36).



sexual drives that establishes the mother as primary object-cathexis of desire<sup>37</sup>. Since this is not a sustainable situation, the presence of the father establishes him as rival for the affections of the mother, and in turn forces the child to replace the mother as object of desire, and consequently sets off a chain of substitutions.<sup>38</sup> But this chain of substitutions is initiated by the conflict in which the father is seen as a rival for the affections of the mother. However, at this stage in Freud's writing, *The Ego and the ID* focuses more on how Freud tries to tie the Oedipus complex with the notion of religion and morality, i.e. origins of culture.

In *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* (1924), Freud elaborates on some of the ideas touched upon in the abovementioned depiction of the Oedipus complex. At this stage, the Oedipus complex is incorporated to explain the development of sexuality. However, it should be stressed that at this moment Freud is predominantly concerned with male sexuality and not female sexuality. To quote Freud at length:

When the (male) child's interest turns to his genitals he betrays the fact by manipulating them frequently; and he then finds that the adults do not approve of this behaviour. More or less plainly, more or less brutally, a threat is pronounced that this part of him which he values so highly will be taken away from him. (174)

For Freud, the overemphasis on the genitals, as marked by the phallic stage, is then overcome through the threat of castration.<sup>39</sup> However, Freud remains cautious to suggest that masturbation is the sum total of the child's sexual development, but does only play a pivotal role during the phallic stage<sup>40</sup>. The main focus of *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex* is Freud's discussion on

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<sup>37</sup> Freud (1924) writes; "To an ever-increasing extent the Oedipus complex reveals its importance as the central phenomenon of the sexual period of early childhood" (173).

<sup>38</sup> For a more in-depth description of substitution in Freud's developmental approach, see Van der Merwe (2010).

<sup>39</sup> Freud (1924) emphasizes the importance of the threat of castration that leads to the demise of the emphasis on genital stimulation: "Now it is in my view what brings about the destruction of the child's phallic genital organization in this threat of castration" (175).

<sup>40</sup> The stages are the Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latent, and Genital stages.

castration, which is also the main threat in the myth of the primal father. It is on this point where Freud's myth of the murder of the primal father and the Oedipus complex overlap. The two components that overlap is the identification with the father and the threat of castration<sup>41</sup>. In both cases, it is the threat of castration that shapes the important turning point in terms of the child's object-cathexis. For Freud, the threat of castration is seen as a conflict within the child, of which Freud writes:

If the satisfaction of love in the field of the Oedipus complex is to cost the child his penis, a conflict is bound to arise between his narcissistic interest in that part of his body and the libidinal cathexis of his parental objects. In this conflict the first of these forces normally triumphs: the child's ego turns away from the Oedipus complex. (176)

Yet, according to Freud, there are longstanding effects of this conflict. It is herein that the Oedipus complex gains such a significant position in psychoanalysis. Consequently, the Oedipus complex explains why the penis achieves its importance and significance. This clarifies why the Oedipus complex heralds the end of the phallic stage and the start of the latent stage in sexual development<sup>42</sup>. The implications for sexual development is epitomized when Freud writes, "The child may have had only very vague notions as to what constitutes a satisfying erotic intercourse; but certainly the penis must play a part in it, for the sensations in his own organ were evidence of that" (176).

But the focus thus far has been on male sexuality. Freud turns his focus towards explaining female sexuality in terms of the Oedipus

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<sup>41</sup> The connection and the similarity between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal father is established when Freud (1924) writes, "The Oedipus complex offered the child two possibilities of satisfaction, an active and a passive one. He could put himself in his father's place in a masculine fashion and have intercourse with his mother as his father did, in which case he would soon have felt the latter as a hindrance; or he might want to take the place of his mother and be loved by his father, in which case his mother would become superfluous" (176).

<sup>42</sup> Freud (1924) writes; "The whole process has, on the one hand, preserved the genital organ - has averted the danger of its loss - and on the other, has paralysed it - has removed its function. This process ushers in the latency period, which now interrupts the child's sexual development" (177).

complex. Freud writes; "The female sex, too, develops an Oedipus complex, a super-ego and a latency period" (178). Freud's first impulse is to apply the same phallic organization and castration complex as found in the development of male sexuality. Freud uses the clitoris<sup>43</sup> as a base of comparison, but in comparison to a penis, and therefore establishes an inferiority-complex.<sup>44</sup> Yet, the threat of castration cannot have the same effect on a girl<sup>45</sup> as it has on a boy, which necessitates an alternative explanation for how a girl moves from the phallic stage to the latent stage, and the setting up of the super-ego. The fear of castration is not enough to explain this transition from the infantile phallic stage to the latent stage, and Freud consequently proposes a different explanation for the girl. There is a greater emphasis on upbringing and a threat from outside (just as in the case with boys and the threat of castration) that threatens the girl with a loss of love. To quote Freud at length:

Her Oedipus complex culminates in a desire, which is long retained, to receive a baby from her father as a gift - to bear him a child. One has the impression that the Oedipus complex is then gradually given up because this wish is never fulfilled. The two wishes - to possess a penis and a child - remain strongly cathected in the unconscious and help to prepare the female creature for her later sexual role. (179)

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<sup>43</sup> Freud makes reference to the clitoris in *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905b) as an important starting point for female sexual development, epitomized when he writes, "If we are to understand how a little girl turns into a woman, we must follow the further vicissitudes of this excitability of the clitoris" (220), and, "When erotogenic susceptibility to stimulation has been successfully transferred by a woman from the *clitoris* to the *vaginal orifice*, it implies that she has adopted a new leading zone unchanged from childhood" (221, my emphasis).

<sup>44</sup> Freud (1924) writes, "The little girl's clitoris behaves just like a penis to begin with; but, when she makes a comparison with a playfellow of the other sex, she perceives that she has 'come off badly' [*come off too short*'] and she feels this as a wrong done to her and as a ground for inferiority" (178).

<sup>45</sup> On the differences between the Oedipus complex in girls and boys, Freud writes, "The girl's Oedipus complex is much simpler than that of the small bearer of the penis; in my experience, it seldom goes beyond the taking of her mother's place and the adopting of a feminine attitude towards her father" (178). The *feminine attitude* is when "a boy wants to take his *mother's* place as the love-object of his *father*" (Freud, 1925:250).

The two important elements Freud focuses on in the female version of the Oedipus complex, is the inferiority as a result of the difference between the clitoris and the penis, and the compensation in the form of producing a baby to the father. Yet Freud does acknowledge the basic difficulties with this presentation of the Oedipus complex in girls, when he writes, "It must be admitted, however, that in general our insight into these developmental processes in girls is unsatisfactory, incomplete and vague" (179). Freud's acknowledgement of the difficulty in ascribing the progression of female sexuality from the phallic stage to the latent stage does not help in solving the problem of providing an explanation for female sexuality and how it pertains to the Oedipus complex. Freud did take up this problem again in 1925.

In *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes* (1925), Freud elaborates on female sexuality and the Oedipus complex<sup>46</sup>. In this article, Freud discussed the differences between girls and boys in terms of the Oedipus complex. Freud initially identifies that the Oedipus complex in little girls raises one more problem, that is, to explain the transition from the mother to the father and the desire to have a child by him<sup>47</sup>. Freud consequently introduces the notion of penis-envy, and provides three consequences of it. They are *jealousy*<sup>48</sup>, *inferiority*<sup>49</sup>, and the transition from the mother to the father as love-object<sup>50</sup>. Another

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<sup>46</sup> It should be noted that Freud never described the female version of the Oedipus complex as the Electra complex. The Electra complex was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung and first used in 1913 and serves to explain the girl's fixation on the father. Freud argues against it in his paper *Female Sexuality* (1931)

<sup>47</sup> Freud (1925) writes which help emphasize the prevalent theoretical necessity to deal with this issue at the time, "Every analyst has come across certain women who cling with especial intensity and tenacity to the bond with their father and to the wish in which it culminates of having a child by him" (251).

<sup>48</sup> On *jealousy* as a consequence of penis-envy, Freud (1925) writes; "She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (252).

<sup>49</sup> On *inferiority*, Freud (1925) writes; "There is another surprising effect of penis-envy, or of the discovery of the inferiority of the clitoris, which is undoubtedly the most important of all" (255).

<sup>50</sup> Freud (1925) writes; "A third consequence of penis-envy seems to be a loosening of the girl's relation with her mother as a love-object. [...] in the end, the girl's mother, who sent her into the world so insufficiently equipped, is almost always held responsible for her lack of a penis" (254).

significant difference between the sexes in terms of the Oedipus complex is also in the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. For boys, Freud writes, to quote at length:

In Boys the complex is not simply repressed, it is literally smashed to pieces by the shock of threatened castration. Its libidinal cathexes are abandoned, desexualized and in part sublimated. [...] In normal, or, it is better to say, in ideal cases, the Oedipus complex exists no longer, even in the unconscious; the super-ego has become its heir. (257)

Yet, for Freud, the same cannot be said for girls, as the same motivation for the dissolution [or demolition] of the Oedipus complex is absent. The biggest driving force in boys was castration, but in girls, castration takes on a completely different form. This remains a highly contentious area in Freud's work<sup>51</sup>.

We will then return to one of Freud's most problematic case studies in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905). It was during the early 1920's that Freud was predominately focussed on explaining female sexuality, and it is within this context that Dora is discussed.

### **1.6. Dora, Her Father, Herr K, and Frau K**

The same argument presented in the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) is applicable to *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a) in as far as Freud published this article a few times with slight alterations. Freud initially wrote the Dora case study in 1901, but only published it in 1905. Freud subsequently revised it in 1912 and again in 1921<sup>52</sup>. The Strachey translation is of the 1925 version, which also poses the question, how should Dora be treated in Freud's oeuvre? The version of the Dora case study most readily available in English is the 1925 edition. This is why

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<sup>51</sup> For an example of a critical reading of Freud's depiction of female sexuality, see Toril Moi's (2004) *From Femininity to Finitude: Freud, Lacan, and Feminism, Again*.

<sup>52</sup> Freud, 1905a:3

the Dora case study is dealt with after focusing on the development of the Oedipus complex between 1923 and 1925, since this was the height of Freud's preoccupation with the Oedipus complex. The 1905 version of Dora did not have any references to the Oedipus complex, although it did refer to the Oedipus myth, as Freud only started using the notion of the Oedipus complex in 1910. However, there are references to the Oedipus legend in the 1905 version, but this should not be confused with the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus legend is based on the Sophoclean myth, which Freud adapts in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) to convey the sentiments of a son's rivalry with his father, and the love for the mother. The Oedipus complex, as we know it today, was only developed later on in Freud's work, especially in his articles published in the 1920s. This section will only focus on the pertinent aspects of the Dora study<sup>53</sup>.

The basic outline of Dora is that Freud first met her when she was sixteen years old. Dora presented symptoms of hoarseness and a nervous cough, but received no treatment. It was only when she was 18 years old that Dora entered into treatment with Freud after a suicide note was discovered by her father<sup>54</sup>. Freud diagnosed Dora as a case of '*petite hystérie*' (1905a:23). The reason why Freud titled the Dora article *A Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* was because Dora terminated the therapy after 3 months. The predominant features of the Dora case study was, as Micale (1995) writes; "the torrid, triangular psychodrama involving her father, a close male friend of the family named Herr K., and the friend's wife, Frau K" (81). Dora's father was having an affair with Frau K, and to continue this affair, Dora's father had allowed Herr K. to make advances on his daughter.

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<sup>53</sup> This section is based on the article by Van Haute and Geyskens (2010a) *Between Disposition, Trauma, and History – How Oedipal was Dora?* This article is a critical evaluation of the Oedipal themes within the Dora case study, yet the importance of the inclusion of this article is to pave the way for the second chapter, in which Lacan heavily relies on the Dora case study to criticize the Oedipus complex.

<sup>54</sup> Dora was also suffering from a range of bodily and psychic symptoms, - aphonia, dyspnoea, nervous cough, feelings of depression, attacks of migraine, which were all symptoms without organic basis or psychic explanation. (Freud, 1905a:24)

In the Dora case study, there are three areas of importance, namely, *Hysteria*, *Bisexuality*, and the *Oedipus complex*<sup>55</sup>. The three are connected, which is why it is necessary to briefly preview each, instead of merely focusing on the Oedipus complex, and its application to the Dora case study.

The main determinants for hysteria - as put forth by Freud in *A Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a) - are a psychical trauma, a conflict of affects, and a disturbance in the sphere of sexuality<sup>56</sup>. There are two incidents in the Dora case study that stands out that Freud highlights as the (potential) traumas. The first incident mentioned occurred when Dora was sixteen years old and went for a walk by the lake with Herr K. During this walk, Herr K declared his love for Dora, to which Dora responded by slapping him and running away. However, this wasn't enough to explain Dora's symptoms in light of this traumatic incident<sup>57</sup>. Dora later reveals to Freud another incident, which is better suited to explain the sexual trauma Freud identified as an explanation for her hysteria<sup>58</sup>. Dora was fourteen years old at the time and was invited to visit Herr K at his shop. Herr K clasped Dora and kissed her on her lips. Dora reacted with a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free, and ran away<sup>59</sup>. The significance of this for Freud was that a normal young woman would feel sexual excitement in this situation, yet Dora reacted with a violent feeling of disgust.<sup>60</sup> The

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<sup>55</sup> This section is greatly based on the article authored by Van Haute & Geyskens, *Between Disposition, Trauma, and History - How Oedipal was Dora?* (2010a)

<sup>56</sup> Freud and Dr Breuer published *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) wherein Freud and Breuer first postulated these determinants.

<sup>57</sup> Some of the symptoms (aphonia, tussis nervosa) of Dora's hysteria was already present when Dora was eight years old.

<sup>58</sup> Freud (1905a) writes; "Dora told me of an earlier episode with Herr K, which was even better calculated to act as a sexual trauma" (27).

<sup>59</sup> Freud (1905a) also suspects the during the kiss, Dora felt Herr K's erect penis as a possible explanation to why Dora experienced disgust. "I believe that during the man's passionate embrace she felt not merely his kiss upon her lips but also the pressure of his erect member against her body" (30).

<sup>60</sup> Freud (1905a) writes, which highlights the consequences of the kiss, "This was surely just the situation to call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never before been approached. But Dora had at that moment a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door". (28)

'displacement of affect', mentioned as a symptom, is highlighted by Dora's reaction to the kiss as disgust rather than what would generally be constituted as a pleasurable genital sensation. For Freud, Dora was 'already entirely and completely hysterical' at this point (Freud, 1905a: 28).

The discussion on *bisexuality* in Dora is applicable to the first publication of the Dora case study, as bisexuality is an important theme broached in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905b)<sup>61</sup>, also initially published in the same year as the Dora case study. In Van Haute and Geyskens' (2010a) *Between Disposition, Trauma, and History - How Oedipal was Dora?*, the focus is shifted away from an Oedipalized reading of Dora, as Freud initially focused on bisexuality as a decisive factor, rather than the Oedipus complex, since the Oedipus complex was only introduced in Freud's work later on. In terms of bisexuality, Van Haute and Geyskens conclude:

The problematic of bisexuality confronts Freud - and all of us? - not only with a structural uncertainty with regard to the object of desire, but also with a structural uncertainty with regard to the place from where this desire is shaped and formed. Hysteria is not only characterized by a rejection of sexuality, but also by an uncertainty of gender-identifications. (2010a, 15)

For Freud, the original publication of *Dora* was far more concerned with the notion of bisexuality than the Oedipus complex, evident when Freud wrote in the post script:

But, once again, in the present paper I have not gone fully into all that might be said to-day about 'somatic compliance', about the infantile germs of perversion about the erotogenic zones, and about our predispositions towards bisexuality; I have merely drawn attention to the points at which the

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<sup>61</sup> References to bisexuality in *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905b), for example, are, "We would rather be inclined to connect the simultaneous presence of these opposites with the opposing masculinity and femininity which are combined in bisexuality" (160); "Since I have become acquainted with the notion of bisexuality I have regarded it as the decisive factor, and without taking bisexuality into account I think it would scarcely be possible to arrive at an understanding of the sexual manifestations that are actually to be observed in men and women" (220).



analysis comes into contact with these organic bases of the symptoms. (113-4)<sup>62</sup>

The relevance of bisexuality to hysteria is also epitomized in Freud trying to identify from a developmental standpoint an explanation for Dora's 'disturbance in the sphere of sexuality' in which Dora's thumb-sucking ("The disgust is a symptom of repression in the erotogenic oral zone, which as we shall hear [p. 51], had been over-indulged in Dora's infancy by the habit of sensual sucking" (Freud, 1905a: 30)) is connected to the development of Dora's hysteria ("Here we have an instance of the complete form of self-gratification by sucking, as it has been described to me by other patients, who had subsequently become anaesthetic and hysterical" (51)).

Freud initially focused on explaining Dora's initial reaction when she was fourteen years old and experienced the encounter with Herr K with disgust. The Oedipus complex was later introduced by Freud to explain the relationship between Dora, her father, Herr K and Frau K<sup>63</sup>. The biggest critique against Freud's Oedipalization of Dora was that Freud was trying to force Dora into a conventional scheme of heterosexual seduction<sup>64</sup>. The way Dora described Frau K reveals her fascination with Frau K; "When Dora talked about Frau K, she used to praise her 'adorable white body' in accents more appropriate to a lover than to a defeated rival" (61). Dora knew of the affair her father had with Frau K, and even intimated that she knew of this unspoken agreement between her father and Herr K, that her father can be with Frau K as long as Herr K could be with Dora. Even despite Dora's protests, her father still perceived the scene at the lake to be a product of her imagination. Yet Freud continually insisted that Dora was in love with Herr K. Freud even discussed Her

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<sup>62</sup> I have not focussed on the organic description or foundation of hysteria, in general or in the Dora case study, but for more information on this discussion, see Van Haute & Geyskens (2010a).

<sup>63</sup> This point will also be important in the Lacan chapter in Grigg's (2006) distinction between hysteria and neuroticism: "One suggestion is that we should see them as responses, respectively, to the clinical experience of hysteria and obsessional neurosis. On this view the Oedipus complex would be the myth that Freud creates in response to the clinic of hysteria" (62).

<sup>64</sup> Van Haute & Geyskens (2010a&2010b); Micale (1995); Grigg (2006).

love of Herr K. with Dora, which Dora continually rejected. Dora even persisted with her denial, although Dora did admit that there was no such feeling after the scene at the lake. Freud also tried to find affirmation from Dora that she had loved her father, "Her own love for her father had therefore been recently revived; and, if so, the question arises to what end this had happened" (58). Freud tries to explain this phenomenon, yet continually returns to his previous assumption and conclusion, that Dora was in love with Herr K. However, the approach Freud takes is rather problematic, especially when a traditional interpretation of the Oedipus complex would emphasize how Herr K is a substitute and representation of Dora's father. Yet, to explain Dora's denial for her love for Herr K, Freud is suggesting that the resurgence of her love for the father was indeed a substitution and representation of Herr K. This is illustrated when Freud writes:

Thus she had succeeded in persuading herself that she had done with Herr K - that was the advantage she derived from this typical process of repression; and yet she was obliged to summon up her infantile affection for her father and to exaggerate it, in order to protect herself against the feelings of love which were constantly pressing forward into consciousness. (58)

Freud's treatment of Dora can be described as a complete failure<sup>65</sup>, especially in terms of his trying to explain female sexuality in Freud's writings of the 1920s, discussed in §1.5. Freud's incorporation of the Oedipus complex was applied to his own detriment, which also explains why contemporary readings of Dora should focus on bisexuality, rather than an Oedipalization of Dora<sup>66</sup>. The application of the Oedipus complex to Dora is rather detrimental to her treatment, which also puts the clinical and theoretical application of the Oedipus complex into doubt. We will return to the Oedipus complex in Chapter 2, and focus on Lacan's criticism thereof.

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<sup>65</sup> The treatment was a complete failure, since Dora left the therapy sessions and never returned.

<sup>66</sup> For a more in-depth discussion on bisexuality over and against the Oedipus complex, see Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b), especially Chapter 4.

### 1.7. Moses and Monotheism

Freud worked on *Moses and Monotheism* between 1934 and 1938<sup>67</sup>, but only published it in 1939. This was also during the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and the subsequent persecution of Jews. *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) is a very difficult text in Freud's oeuvre and focuses on three topics: Anti-Semitism, Religion, and Trauma. Anti-Semitism is one of the most obvious assumptions to draw, given the time and climate in which *Moses and Monotheism* was written and published.<sup>68</sup> Religion is invoked to explain the transition from Judaism to Christianity. Trauma is essentially used to explain the transition from Judaism to Christianity. Therefore, both monotheistic religions have Moses in common. The killing of Moses plays a vital part, in as much as this murder epitomizes a trauma and explains the emergence of monotheism. It is in the murder of Moses that *Moses and Monotheism* is a continuation of *Totem and Taboo*.<sup>69</sup>

The Oedipus complex is introduced in *Moses and Monotheism* to explain this trauma. This is why Freud borrows the hypothesis of Sellin<sup>70</sup> that Moses was an Egyptian and was murdered. This is a fascinating combination of elements that combine history, Moses, religion, trauma and the Oedipus complex<sup>71</sup>. However, an important distinction

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<sup>67</sup> From a historical perspective, many commentators have highlighted how Freud was dealing with the topic of Jewish persecution, anti-Semitism, and religion.

<sup>68</sup> Anti-Semitism and religion do go hand in hand, according to Freud (1939), "Their hatred of Jews is at bottom a hatred of Christians, and we need not be surprised that in the German Nationalist-Socialist revolution this intimate relation between the two monotheist religions finds such a clear expression in the hostile treatment of both of them" (92).

<sup>69</sup> The murder of the primal father led to remorse, just as the murder of Moses had the same effect. Freud (1939) writes, "It is plausible to conjecture that remorse for the murder of Moses provided the stimulus for the wishful phantasy of the Messiah, who was to return and lead his people to redemption and the promised world-dominion" (89).

<sup>70</sup> Freud references Sellin early on which depicts a more historical discussion regarding Sellin's hypothesis that Moses was an Egyptian, and that he was murdered by the Jews. (Freud, 1939:37&47-50&93)

<sup>71</sup> Caruth (1991) writes, which combines all the elements; "The indirect referentiality of history is also, I would argue, at the core of Freud's understanding of the political shape of Jewish culture, in its repeated confrontation with anti-Semitism. For the murder of Moses, as Freud argues,

needs to be made in Freud's depiction of Moses, as summarized by Robert Banks (1973). First, that there is confusion between the Egyptian Moses and the Hebrew Moses.<sup>72</sup> This all coincides with the Egyptian Moses' reform of religion in Egypt and introduced monotheism, which lead to a revolt and his murder<sup>73</sup>. After this Egyptian Moses was murdered, there was another leader who was then confused with the Hebrew Moses, who made adjustments to the monotheistic religion, known as henotheistic Yahweh worship<sup>74</sup>.

It is at this point that *Moses and Monotheism* ties in with *Totem and Taboo*, whereby the unconscious guilt of murdering the primal father manifested, and later came to the surface in the interpretations of the crucifixion of Jesus, and explains why Christianity acknowledges the son rather than the Father.<sup>75</sup> This once again returns to the

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is in fact a repetition of an earlier murder in the history of mankind, the murder of the primal father by his rebellious sons, which occurred in primeval history; and it is the unconscious repetition and acknowledgment of this fact that explains both Judaism and its Christian antagonists. Indeed, Freud says, when Paul interprets the death of Christ as the atonement for an original sin, he is belatedly and unconsciously remembering the murder of Moses which still, in the history of the Jews, remains buried in unconsciousness. In belatedly atoning, as sons, for the father's murder, Christians feel Oedipal rivalry with their Jewish older brothers, a lingering castration anxiety, brought out by Jewish circumcision, and finally a complaint that the Jews will not admit the guilt which the Christians, in their recognition of Christ's death, have admitted. By appearing only belatedly, then, the historical effect of trauma, in Freud's text, is ultimately its inscription of the Jews in a history always bound to the history of the Christians" (187).

<sup>72</sup> To quote Banks (1973), "That Moses was not a Hebrew but an Egyptian associated with the monotheistic reforms of Ikhnaton in the fourteenth century B.C." (408).

<sup>73</sup> To quote Banks (1973), "In the face of the popular reaction after the latter's death, he decided to found a nation which would remain faithful to the new religion. As this was in the process of being achieved the Israelites revolted against him and killed him" (408)

<sup>74</sup> Banks (1973) wrote, "Shortly afterwards another leader arose, later confused with Moses, who initiated the henotheistic Yahweh worship which, though mixed with elements of the original monotheism, for centuries predominated in the new land" (408)

<sup>75</sup> Banks (1973) wrote, "The teaching of the original Moses remained a latent force in the racial unconscious of Israel and only emerged in the powerful teaching of the prophets. Later still, the unconscious guilt associated with the slaying of their primal father led to the hope of a second Moses in the expectation of the Messiah. This guilt was finally brought to the surface in the Pauline teaching on original sin, and was overcome through his interpretation of the death of Jesus in terms of a long delayed atonement on the part of one of the brothers for the slaying of the primal father. As a result of his deification, Christianity became a religion based on acknowledgment of the son rather than the father" (409).

transition from Judaism to Christianity, and the institution of monotheism.

However, the focus of this thesis is on the Oedipus complex, and illustrates how *Moses and Monotheism* is a critique on Judaism through an Oedipal analysis of the deified Moses.<sup>76</sup> Yet what is most striking and relevant is how Freud draws comparisons between religion and neurosis. For this 'analogy' (72) to succeed, Freud has to illustrate how religion and obsessional neurosis originate from trauma.<sup>77</sup>

Neurosis accounts for an unintelligible manifestation based on a previous incident that has been forgotten.<sup>78</sup> Freud concludes as much that the reference to a previous incident is developed, instead of created. This highlights two aspects, first, that the origins of neurosis originate in childhood, and second, that what was originally deemed 'innocent' can suddenly be recalled as traumatic. This is also connected with the concept of 'screen memories' that Freud describes as a vivid impression, that also helps explain why there are changing attitudes towards prior experiences. Although Freud initially expresses 'screen memories' in terms of the transition from childhood to adolescence, marked by puberty. The inclusion of 'screen memories' substantiate Freud's description of trauma as an impression 'experienced early and later forgotten'. As Freud writes, "It is only rarely that an infantile neurosis continues without interruption into an adult one" (77) and "this [the neurosis manifesting as a belated effect of the trauma] occurs either at the irruption of puberty or some while later" (77). This irruption creates a separation and breaks off a part of the ego that attempts to find reconciliation with the whole. It is however easier said than done, as the confrontation with this portion separated

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<sup>76</sup> For more information on this, see R.Z. Friedman (1998) *Freud's Religion: Oedipus and Moses*.

<sup>77</sup> As Freud (1939) defines traumas: "We give the name *traumas* to those impressions, experienced early and later forgotten, to which we attach such great importance in the aetiology of the neuroses" (72).

<sup>78</sup> Memory is a significant element in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), as illustrated in Jan Assmann's (1999) *Monothéisme et Mémoire: Le Moïse de Freud et la Tradition Biblique*.

from the ego is often difficult to reintegrate with the rest of the ego.

This would be the context in which Freud reintroduces the Oedipus complex, and more specifically in context of a pre-pubescent trauma manifesting in post-pubescent behaviour and symptoms. Freud discusses the case-study of a little boy who shared his parents' bedroom during his early childhood. It only lasted a few years, but he did regularly observe his parents performing sexual acts. Freud emphasizes how the child not only saw the sexual acts but also heard them. What is of interest is that after his first spontaneous 'emission' or ejaculation, emerged a litany of symptoms. He was sensitive to noises specifically at night and would struggle to fall asleep after. Freud provides two explanations, the first is how he creates a defence against those impressions and second, as an attempt to recreate or re-establish the state he was in when he listened to those 'impressions'. To quote Freud (1939) at length:

The child was aroused prematurely by observations of this kind to an aggressive masculinity and began to excite his little penis with his hand and to attempt various sexual attacks on his mother, thus identifying himself with his father, in whose place he was putting himself. This went on until at last his mother forbade him to touch his penis and further threatened that she would tell his father, who would punish him by taking his sinful organ away. (79)

This was a decisive turning point in this boy's behaviour as this threat of castration clearly had a very traumatic effect. Freud continues:

Instead of identifying himself with his father, he was afraid of him, adopted a passive attitude to him and, by occasional naughtinesses, provoked him into administering corporal punishment; this had a sexual meaning for him, so that he was thus able to identify himself with his ill-treated mother. He clung to his mother herself more and more anxiously, as though he could not do without her love for a single moment, since he

saw in it a protection against the danger of castration which threatened him from his father. (79)

However, as much as Freud would like to admit that this modification resulting from the Oedipus complex was able to correct certain behaviours, and allow this boy to pass through the latency phase relatively unscathed, Freud does stress that the Oedipus complex did indeed leave a mark, as the arrival puberty did intensify his main symptom, i.e. sexual impotence. The outcome was that he had stopped physical stimulation of the penis, and maintained a more psychical masturbation that contained sadistic-masochistic phantasies, remnants of his earlier observations of intercourse between his parents. The boy's attitude towards his father in particular is striking to Freud, as this illustrated in an intensified masculinity during puberty as well as increased insubordination against the father. This case study finds conclusion after the death of the father where the boy, now obviously a man, had found a wife. But this time around, he had adopted and imbued many of the characteristics and personality traits that his father had had.

The next step Freud takes is to show how the abovementioned example of obsessional neurosis is connected to religion. By extending the argument in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and the humanization of the totem animal<sup>79</sup>, it is possible for Freud to explain religion as an extension of totemism. The totem meal is repeated as a rite of Christian Communion, which is also a symbolic representation of taking in the blood and flesh of the god. *Moses and Monotheism* elaborates on *Totem and Taboo* by explaining how religion can be explained through totemism, especially as Freud employs this argument to explain the transition from Judaism to Christianity, as well as anti-Semitism. Freud's entire argument hinges on the murder of the father, which is the main focus of Lacan's critical turn on the Oedipus complex.

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<sup>79</sup> On the humanization of the totem animal, Freud (1939) writes; "The first step away from totemism was the humanizing of the being who was worshipped. In place of the animal, human gods appear, whose derivation from the totem is not concealed" (83).

## 1.8. Conclusion

Freud deals with the Oedipus complex over a period of 30 years that all starts with the question, What is the role of the father? and more importantly, *What is the father?* In dealing with this question, Freud uses two scenarios to conceptualize the role of the father following the death of his own father and his 1909 publications featuring the case studies of *Little Hans*<sup>80</sup> and the *Ratman*<sup>81</sup>. The starting point is the ambivalent emotional attitude and identification with the father that Freud incorporates into his discussion on the origins of culture in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Freud returns to this argument on the murder of the father of the primal horde to explain religion in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), more specifically the transition from Judaism to Christianity.

The Oedipus complex does have elements of the father of the primal horde - specifically the ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father, as well as identification with the father - even though Freud maintains a distinction between the Oedipus complex and myth of the primal horde in his earlier works, and seems to collapse this distinction in his later writings. The Oedipus complex features in two important contexts. Firstly, to explain the transition from the phallic stage to the latent stage in terms of psychosexual development. Secondly, to explain inter-familial relations, for example in the Dora case study between Dora, her father, Herr K and Frau K. However, it is in this second application that the Oedipus complex encounters greatest resistance in as much as Dora's treatment was unsuccessful and failed on both a clinical and practical approach.

This paper separated the murder of the father of the primal horde and the Oedipus complex for two reasons. First, Freud maintains the distinction between the myth of the primal horde and the Oedipus complex in his earlier writings, but this distinction is collapsed

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<sup>80</sup> Freud deals with Little Hans in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old boy* (1909a).

<sup>81</sup> Freud deals with the Ratman in *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* (1909b).



in his later writings. Second, this distinction will prove helpful in the following chapter discussing Lacan's critical evaluation of the Oedipus complex, whereby in Grigg's article<sup>82</sup>, the myth of the father of the primal horde is a reaction to obsessional neurosis, whereas the Oedipus complex is a reaction to hysteria. However, this distinction that Grigg makes is highly problematic and disputed, but it is still incorporated in this thesis for two reasons: First, to remain close to the layout of Griggs argument, and second, by keeping certain themes together help to explain Freud's theory in a systematic approach.

The next chapter will focus on Lacan's critique of the Oedipus complex, as discussed in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). Lacan's critique of the Oedipus complex proposes that we treat the Oedipus complex as a symptom, and should therefore be interpreted the same way one would interpret a dream. This is in stark contrast to other criticisms that reject the Oedipus complex based on scientific arguments, and so doing, suggest that the Oedipus complex and castration anxiety should be treated as metaphors or analogies<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Grigg (2006) *Beyond the Oedipus Complex*

<sup>83</sup> For more on the *Scientific Status of Psychoanalytic Theory*, see Pervin & John (2001), pages 156-158.

## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Lacan's earlier writing focuses on the Oedipus complex, and defending the Oedipus complex in innovative ways utilizing Freud's depiction, but also distinguishing Lacan from Freud. However, between 1969 and 1971, there is a sudden and critical turn in Lacan's approach to the Oedipus complex captured in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). Lacan dismisses the Oedipus complex as useless, irrelevant, and refers to it as 'Freud's Dream' (2007: 117). To explain the Oedipus complex as Freud's dream, Lacan hinges the argument on the distinction between manifest content and latent content in dreams. Manifest content refers to the actual dream, whereas latent content refers to the underlying meaning thereof. Therefore, Lacan proposes that one should treat Freud's Oedipus complex, *Totem and Taboo* (1913)<sup>84</sup>, and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) as manifest content. This chapter will show what Lacan refers to as the latent content of Freud's dream.

The first section will focus on Lacan's earlier writings when he was a fervent defender of the Oedipus complex. Lacan defends and applies the Oedipus complex in a number of ways that prove useful and clarifies its role within psychoanalysis.

The second section focuses on the main themes introduced in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). First, to explain why Lacan refers to the Oedipus complex as unusable; and second, to explain why Lacan refers to the Oedipus complex as Freud's dream. These two aspects go hand in hand for Lacan. Lacan tries to uncover the underlying meaning of the Oedipus complex, instead of just dismissing it completely. Initially Lacan turns to Lévi-Strauss and the structuralist approach that he employs to uncover the meaning of myths. The Oedipus complex is based on the Sophoclean myth, which

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<sup>84</sup> There is a significant difference between Freud and Lacan's treatment of the myth of the primal horde that is presented in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). For Freud, this murder of the father was an actual incident, whereas Lacan treats it as a myth.

Freud adapts in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) to convey the sentiments of a son's rivalry with his father, and his love for the mother. If the Oedipus complex is Freud's dream, then Lacan suggests that it be interpreted and treated as such and concludes, as will be illustrated in this chapter, that the latent content of Freud's dream is centered on his desire to save the father.

The third section of this chapter focuses on Lacan's discussion of the Oedipus complex as an attempt to save the father. Lacan focuses primarily on three texts of Freud, namely, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). The constant feature in all three texts is the extent to which Freud defends the depiction of the father. Lacan consequently builds an argument based on Freud's dealing with the loss of his own father as mentioned in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Lacan consequently argues that Freud is concealing his own father's fallibility and temporality, by creating a father figure that is all-powerful. According to Lacan, what Freud is hiding is that the master (the Freudian father) is castrated.

## 2.2. Lacan's Earlier Depiction of the Oedipus Complex

There are predominantly two descriptions and depictions of the Oedipus complex in Lacan's writing, the description prior to 1969 and the description following 1969. This section will provide a brief summary of Lacan's earlier depiction of the Oedipus complex as seen in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (2008), *Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis* (1998b), and *Écrits* (2006)<sup>85</sup>, respectively first presented in 1959-60, 1964, and a collection of Lacan's articles published prior to 1966.<sup>86</sup> It is during this time that Lacan defends the Oedipus complex on both a theoretical basis, as well as from an anthropological perspective.

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<sup>85</sup> All references within the *Écrits* use the original French page numbering, which feature in the margins of the page.

<sup>86</sup> Two other texts of Lacan that incorporate the Oedipus complex, in his earlier writings, occurred between 1956 and 1958. These seminars are published as *Les Relations d'Objet* (1994) and *Formations de l'Inconscient* (1998a), and are at this point, still untranslated.

In Lacan's initial depiction of the Oedipus complex prior to 1969, he defended the Oedipus complex in terms of four aspects<sup>87</sup>: firstly, to explain *guilt* through the connection between the Oedipus complex and the superego; secondly, to illustrate the formation of the Law through the *Non du Père/Nom du Père* [the No of the Father/Name of the Father]; thirdly, to explain secondary identification, and finally, to explain desire.

The first explanation of the Oedipus complex focuses on the introduction of *guilt* in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) as expressed through 'myth of the primal horde'<sup>88</sup>. This guilt is narrowly attached to the ambivalent feelings towards the father. This guilt also resonates in the superego, in that according to Lacan, the more you obey the superego, the more you are guilty<sup>89</sup>. In other words, the more you obey the superego, the more you are entrenched in maintaining the superego, but since you cannot live up to the impossible ideals of the superego<sup>90</sup>, the more you try to live up to the superego, the more you fail, and therefore, the more you are guilty of not living up to the superego.<sup>91</sup> The superego ties in with the Oedipus complex in as far as Freud links the two in two ways. First, through the binding feature of *guilt*, evidenced in both the

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<sup>87</sup> For a more in-depth explanation of these four aspects, see Van der Merwe (2010), pages 143-9.

<sup>88</sup> Lacan (2006) writes, "Here, obviously, lies the import that Freud's work, *Totem and Taboo*, still has, despite the mythical circularity that vitiates it, insofar as from a mythological event - the killing of the father - it derives the subjective dimension that gives this event its meaning: guilt" (p. 95).

<sup>89</sup> Lacan (2008) words this sentiment differently when he writes, "... the form called the superego, operates according to an economy such that the more one sacrifices to it, the more it demands" (372).

<sup>90</sup> The superego and the ego-ideal are synonymous, yet this paper does not elaborate on this distinction. For more information on how the superego comes to be, see Van der Merwe (2010).

<sup>91</sup> Slavoj Žižek (2005) says the same, but a bit differently and in greater detail: "According to Lacan, this 'feeling of guilt' is not a self-deception to be dispelled in the course of the psychoanalytic cure - we really are guilty: superego draws the energy of the pressure it exerts upon the subject from the fact that the subject was not faithful to his desire, that he gave it up. Our sacrificing to the superego, our paying tribute to it, only corroborates our guilt. For that reason our debt to the superego is unredeemable: the more we pay it off, the more we owe. Superego is like the extortioner slowly bleeding us to death - the more he gets, the stronger his hold on us" (p.68, his italics).

Oedipus complex and the superego. Second, to explain how the Oedipus complex precedes the superego in terms of a developmental approach<sup>92</sup>.

The second explanation of the Oedipus complex focuses on the father as source of the Law. Lacan develops this idea based on Freud's presentation in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and the discussion of the primal horde as the origins of culture. To achieve this end, Lacan introduces the terminology of the *Non du Père/Nom du Père* [the No of the Father/Name of the Father], which is an interesting wordplay to illustrate how the Name of the Father is synonymous with the No of the Father. For Lacan, this depiction of the father is an elaboration on Freud's depiction of the father as interferer with desire - discussed in Chapter 1 with regard to the Ratman. Lacan (2006) defines the primordial Law as follows;

The primordial Law is therefore the Law which, in regulating marriage ties, superimposes the reign of culture over the reign of nature, the latter being subject to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely the subjective pivot of that Law, laid bare by the modern tendency to reduce the objects the subject is forbidden to choose to the mother and the sisters, full license, moreover, not yet being entirely granted beyond them. (277)

This primordial Law focuses solely on the object choice and prohibits any familial relations, such as Freud depicts through the *totemic* laws. However, since this Law can only be expressed in language, and passed from one generation to the next, Lacan emphasizes that it is symbolic. Lacan furthermore stresses that in Freud's account of the primal horde, the Father is seen as synonymous with this Law, which also leads to the conclusion that since the Father utters this no, he is then inevitably seen as the

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<sup>92</sup> Freud (1923) writes, clearly linking the superego and the Oedipus complex in terms of development: "The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, school and reading), the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on - in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt" (35).

source and origin of this law<sup>93</sup>. Therefore, the Name of the Father and the No of the Father are used synonymously in Lacan and ties in with the Oedipus complex in terms of prohibiting familial relations, which essentially determines the objects of desire. Since the Father is seen as the source of the Law, the Oedipus complex is the expression of this prohibition which acts as a cultural intervention. This is illustrated when Lacan (2006) writes, "The very normalization of this maturation is henceforth dependent in man on cultural intervention, as is exemplified by the fact that sexual object choice is dependent upon the Oedipus complex" (98).

The third explanation of the Oedipus complex is through the application of *secondary identification*. Lacan refers to this secondary identification, since the first identification taking place in the mirror stage<sup>94</sup>. Lacan also highlights how this is a pivotal part of Freud's explanation of the Oedipus complex in terms of the identification with the parent of the same gender. This notion of identification is a continuation of Freud's argument in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Freud stresses in the examples of obsessional neurosis, the ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father, as well as identification with the father. As argued in Chapter 1, Freud makes a distinction between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde, whereas Lacan collapses this distinction in his earlier writings. Lacan is thus justified in emphasizing *secondary identification* as a redeeming quality to validate the Oedipus complex in terms of aggression<sup>95</sup> as a result of *secondary identification* in light of the Oedipus complex<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> Lacan (2006) writes, "It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law" (278).

<sup>94</sup> The mirror stage in Lacan's work proves a valuable developmental moment that illustrates far more than just the hypothesis of an 18-month-old child gazing into a mirror. For more on the mirror stage, see Lacan's *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function* in *Écrits* (2006:93-81) and Van der Merwe (2010), pages 24-32.

<sup>95</sup> Aggression is a highly contemptuous notion with Lacanian psychoanalysis as well as psychoanalysis in general. For a more in-depth explanation, see Van der Merwe (2010), pages 138-149.

<sup>96</sup> Lacan (2006) writes, to quote at length; "I shall indicate here how I conceive of its [the notion of aggressiveness] dialectical link with the function of the Oedipus complex. In its normal form, its function is that of sublimation, which precisely designates an identificatory reshaping of

The fourth explanation of the Oedipus complex focuses on the notion of desire. Referring to the importance of desire within psychoanalysis in general, Lacan (2006) writes:

What psychoanalysis shows us about desire in what might be called its most natural function, since the survival of the species depends on it, is not only that it is subjected, in its agency, its appropriation, and even its very normality, to the accidents of the subject's history (the notion of trauma as contingency), but also that all this requires the assistance of structural elements - which, in order to intervene, can do very well without these accidents. (812)

In other words, the importance of this trauma is a pivotal developmental moment which is included in the Oedipus complex, just as Lacan connects the determination of the object of desire into the Oedipus complex. The Father, as the symbol of the Law, is seen as the origin of this Law, and consequently acts as the interferer with desire. Desire is consequently inscribed into the Oedipus complex from a historical perspective, whereas Lacan explains desire through the Oedipus complex from a structural approach<sup>97</sup>.

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the subject and - as Freud wrote when he felt the need to a 'topographical' coordination of psychical dynamisms - a *secondary identification* by introjections of the imago of the parent of the same sex" (116-7, his italics).

<sup>97</sup> There is a second (more contrived and complicated) explanation of desire (which won't be discussed here, for the sake of brevity), in as much as Lacan introduces the notion of the other, as articulated in Lacan's (1998b) *Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*: "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (p. 235), which Lacan describes in greater detail, "If it is merely at the level of the desire of the Other that man can recognize his desire, as desire of the Other, is there not something here that must appear to him to be an obstacle to his fading, which is a point at which his desire can never be recognized? This obstacle is never lifted, nor ever to be lifted, for analytic experience shows us that it is in seeing a whole chain come into play at the level of the desire of the Other that the subject's desire is constituted" (p. 235, my italics). A second explanation for man's desire being the desire of the Other, is that desire is located within the coordinates of the Other, as it is expressed in language. It is within language that the self (in terms of the ideal *imago* - explained in the *mirror stage*) as well as the Other is identified.

The important contribution that Lacan makes to the Oedipus complex, is that Lacan acknowledges how the Oedipus complex plays a bigger role in Freud's writing than solely explaining the transition from the phallic stage to the latent stage in sexual development. In *Écrits*, Lacan starts to show a critical approach to the Oedipus complex, in which he asks the fundamental question he takes up again in - and forms the basis of - *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007), when Lacan (2006) writes:

For the [Oedipus] myth does not confine itself to working the puppet of sexual rivalry. It would be better to read in it what Freud requires us to contemplate using this coordinates; for they boil down to the question with which he himself began: What is a Father? (812)

Lacan shifts his entire focus of the Oedipus complex to this question, 'What is a Father?', which forms the main focus of *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007), and furthermore forms the foundation of Lacan's critical appraisal of the Oedipus complex. It was only between 1969 and 1971 that Lacan became increasingly critical of the Oedipus complex as a clinical and theoretical aspect of psychoanalysis. It was during this time that he referred to Oedipus as unusable and as Freud's dream. The next section will focus on Lacan's depiction of this critical turn.

### 2.3. Beyond the Oedipus Complex

In Freud's letters to Fliess (Freud, 1986)<sup>98</sup> one can find the earliest references to the Oedipus complex. Freud writes that he had discovered the love for the mother and the subsequent rivalry with the father. It is in Freud's (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams* that he returns to this idea of "being in love with the one parent and hating the other" (294). Freud writes that he found the expression of this in Sophocles' tragic play, *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus unknowingly murdered his father, King Laius, and then married his mother, Jocaste. For Freud, this affirms the fulfilment of childhood wishes,

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<sup>98</sup> This letter was originally archived as letter 71 of Freud (1950) *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*.



which after puberty are repressed, yet retained in the unconscious. Freud therefore incorporates Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as an example, as well as a validation of this love for one parent, and the subsequent rivalry with the other.

Lacan elaborates in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007) his critical turn towards the Oedipus complex. For Lacan, it becomes of greater significance how the Sophoclean myth of *Oedipus Rex* is treated in Freud's work, as opposed to how it should be treated. Lacan distinguishes between an anthropological reading and a psychoanalytic reading of Freud's incorporation of this text. This discussion will focus on four areas. First, to illustrate what Lacan means when he says that the Oedipus complex is unusable and that it is Freud's dream. Second, how Lacan employs a technique introduced by Lévi-Strauss to evaluate myths and to divulge their underlying meaning. Third, how Freud, according to Lacan, employs the traditional Sophoclean version of Oedipus, and how this should be treated in light of the previous point. Finally, how Lacan employs the distinction between myths and dreams to give us the important context within which the Oedipus complex should be read and treated.

### **2.3.1. Unusable Oedipus**

Lacan's critique of Freud's Oedipus complex as both unusable and Freud's dream go hand in hand. Lacan provides two descriptions for this critical turn, on the one hand that the Oedipus complex is unusable and on the other, that the Oedipus complex is Freud's dream<sup>99</sup>. The claim of the Oedipus complex as unusable is emphasized in the failure of the applicability of the Oedipus complex outside of a theoretical perspective<sup>100</sup>.

For Lacan, the depiction of the Oedipus complex as unusable is justified by the overemphasis given to the Father. The biggest functional and theoretical critique against the Oedipus complex that

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<sup>99</sup> Oedipus, as Freud's dream will be treated in greater detail in section 2.3.2.

<sup>100</sup> Lacan (2007) writes, "I am not at all saying that the Oedipus complex is of no use, nor that it has no relationship with what we do" (112).

renders it unusable is the overemphasis on the role of the father, whereas Lacan points towards the mother as the dominant force in the child's life. Judging by Lacan's reaction towards the increased awareness of the mother's role in psychoanalysis,<sup>101</sup> the unusable depiction of the Oedipus complex is in the overemphasis on the role of the father that undermines the importance of the mother. To quote Lacan (2007):

The mother's role is the mother's desire. That's fundamental. The mother's desire is not something that is bearable just like that, that you are indifferent to. It will always wreak havoc. A huge crocodile in whose jaws you are – that's the mother. One never knows what might suddenly come over her and make her shut her trap. That's what the mother's desire is. (112)<sup>102</sup>

Lacan emphasises the importance of the mother and her all-consuming desire that can neither be ignored, nor feigned. This depiction of the mother's desire is an inversion of the classical Oedipal schema that focuses on, and emphasizes, the father. The Oedipus complex is unusable in its depiction of the mother as a passive participant, whereby Lacan shows how the mother is far more important. Lacan (2007) continues, and as a result describes the role of the father:

There is a roller, made out of stone of course, which is there, potentially, at the level of her trap, and it acts as a restraint, as a wedge. It's what is called phallus. It's the roller that shelters you, if, all of a sudden, she closes it. (112)<sup>103</sup>

The father's role is subsequently to act as a defence against the mother's all-consuming desire. Through incorporating the analogy between the mother as the crocodile that threatens to close its jaws

<sup>101</sup> Lacan (2007) writes, "Psychoanalysts are becoming increasingly involved in something which is, in effect, excessively important, namely the mother's role." (112)

<sup>102</sup> *Le rôle de la mère, c'est le désir de la mère. C'est capital. Le désir de la mère n'est pas quelque chose qu'on peut supporter comme ça, que cela vous soit indifférent. Ça entraîne toujours des dégâts. Un grand crocodile dans la bouche duquel vous êtes – c'est la mère. On ne sait pas ce qui peut lui prendre tout d'un coup, de refermer son clapet. C'est ça, le désir de la mère* (Lacan, 1991: 129).

<sup>103</sup> *Il y a un rouleau, en pierre bien sûr, qui est là en puissance au niveau du clapet et ça retient, ça coince. C'est ce qu'on appelle le phallus. C'est le rouleau qui vous met à l'abri, si, tout d'un coup, ça se referme* (Lacan, 1991:129).

on the child, the father is therefore a deterrent and acts as a wedge that prevents the jaws from fully closing over the child. It is through the father's phallus that the child is saved from the mother's all-consuming desire.<sup>104</sup> Since the Oedipus complex fails to account for the mother's role (beyond a passive object of desire) and thus, as a result, overemphasizes the father. This essentially renders the Oedipus complex unusable. The most prominent feature of the classical reading of the Oedipus complex is placed squarely on father and undermines what Lacan deems the most important element, the mother's desire.

### 2.3.2. Oedipus as Freud's Dream

It is based on this overemphasis of the role of the Father that stirred Lacan's suspicions and led to his depiction of the Oedipus complex as Freud's dream. Grigg (2006) summarises the consequences of depicting the Oedipus complex as such:

If it is a dream, he [Lacan] says, it can no longer be a theoretical construction to be unpacked, dissected, and rebuilt; it can no longer be the bedrock of psychoanalysis. If it is Freud's dream, it is a formation of the unconscious and that implies that it calls for interpretation. (51)

In other words, in referring to the Oedipus complex as Freud's dream, Lacan is stating that it should then be treated as such, and not as a clinical, anthropological, or analytical tool.

Lacan consequently suggests that Freud's analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* should be read in the context of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)<sup>105</sup> – we will return to this argument. This argument has significant consequences for the Oedipus complex in as far as how it should be treated, either anthropologically, or

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<sup>104</sup> This depiction is also found in Verhaeghe (2006a) where the role of the mother is essentially the source of this prohibited enjoyment, whereas the father's role is the structural operator of this prohibition. Consequently, the phallus, this wedge Lacan is describing, is effectively the father preventing the mother from her all-consuming desire.

<sup>105</sup> For more on the argument of reading the Oedipus complex in light of Freud's (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams* see Demoulin (2002) and Van Haute (2010:135).

psychoanalytically<sup>106</sup>. The difference in treatment is in the way it is dealt with and discussed, for example, by treating it anthropologically, one would treat the Oedipus complex as an actual event, whereas treating it psychoanalytically implies treating it as one would a symptom, and therefore, it needs to be interpreted to uncover its underlying significance. However, it is in Lévi-Strauss' work that Lacan finds a crucial link to interpreting the Oedipus complex (see §2.3.3.). However, as will be discussed in the subsequent sections, there is a significant difference between myths and dreams (see §2.3.4.). This discussion presenting the Oedipus complex as Freud's dream will be taken up again in section 2.4.1. The aforementioned discussion can only continue after elaborating on the distinction between myths and dreams.

### **2.3.3. Lévi-Strauss and a Structuralist Approach to Oedipus**

The shift from an anthropological- to a psychoanalytical treatment of the Oedipus complex is greatly inspired by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, specifically in *The Structural Study of Myth* (1955). Lévi-Strauss develops a method for uncovering the underlying structures of myths and shows that the meaning of the myth is not in the telling of the story, but in the way that the elements of the myth or the 'mythemes' are combined with one another. A mytheme is treated as a proposition or a phrase. Lévi-Strauss applies this method to the Oedipus complex and illustrates how Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* are variations of the same myth. Lévi-Strauss arranges the mythemes in four columns as follow:

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<sup>106</sup> To quote Grigg (2006), "But calling it a dream he [Lacan] is implying that there is a place for it to be treated psychoanalytically and not anthropologically" (52).

1	2	3	4
Oedipus marries his mother, Jocaste	Oedipus kills his father, Laius	Oedipus immolates the sphinx	"Labdacos" means lame. "Laius" means left
Antigone buries her brother, Polynices, in defiance of the Law	Eteocles kills his brother, Polynices		"Oedipus" means swollen foot
Blood ties are overrated	Blood ties are underrated	The destruction of monsters	Difficulties in walking properly
Contraries human Origins		Contraries Autochthonous Origins	
Contraries			

Columns 1 and 2 are contraries, and columns 3 and 4 are also contraries, but their contraries are less obvious than column 1 and 2, in as far as the contraries are symbolic. Column 4 highlights the difficulty with walking, which represents the terrestrial, or autochthonous, origins of humans. Column 3 highlights the destruction of monsters, which is also the negation of autochthonous origins. Columns 1 and 2 focus on the origins of man through relational ties. Therefore, columns 1 and 2 and columns 3 and 4 are contrary points in terms of the question of the origins of humans.

For Lévi-Strauss the myth revolves around the two contraries and how they are 'bridged' in the myth. As illustrated by Grigg (2006), the Oedipus myth deals with two issues when he writes;

These myths thus use this "bridging" technique to move from an initial problem - "Is one born from one or two?" - that is the inevitable question and enigma of human reproduction, to another, derivative issue, "Is the same born out of the same or out of something that is different?" (54)

Therefore, according to Lévi-Strauss, this structural approach reveals the structural law of the Oedipus complex. This structural law confronts the impossibility of passing between the two contradictions, on the one hand, the autochthonous origins of humans, and on the other hand, the recognition of birth from two

parents. However, Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the Oedipus complex does emphasize two aspects: First, the universality of the Oedipus complex, since there are variations of this Oedipal theme abound in different cultures that have no connection with one another. Second, that Freud's version of the Oedipus myth should be treated as a variation and a modern version of the classical Sophoclean myth. Yet, Freud's version does differ from the Sophoclean version in an important way, namely, that the question of autochthony disappears, and the only question remaining is "How is one born from two?" Lacan interprets this as a question as to the possibility of sexual relations.

Lacan builds on Lévi-Strauss' depiction of the Oedipus complex as seen in his depiction and treatment of myths. The difference between Lacan and Lévi-Strauss is that Lacan stresses that the myth covers this central contradiction, but that there is truth in the myth, even though truth takes the structure of fiction. Lacan (2007) writes, "Myth has today been made a branch of linguistics. I mean that what one says that is most serious about myth comes out of linguistics" (110).<sup>107</sup> Lacan stresses the linguistic aspect of the myth in two ways, that it is vocally passed from generation to generation, but also, that it consists of a half-saying (in as much as it cannot fully express that which it is trying to say). This half-saying is evident in Lacan's description of Lévi-Strauss' treatment of myths in general, and the Oedipus complex specifically. Lacan (2007) writes:

The impossibility of connecting groups of relations - it is a question of bundles of relations, as he defines myths - with one another is overcome, or, more exactly, replaced by the affirmation that two mutually contradictory relations are identical, this being so insofar as each is, like the other, self-contradictory. In short, half-saying is the internal law of every species of enunciation of truth, and what incarnates it best is myth. (110)

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<sup>107</sup> *Je veux dire que ce qu'on dit de plus sérieux sur le mythe, c'est en partant de la linguistique* (Lacan, 1991:126).

For Lacan, the half-saying and the internal law goes beyond just myths, but is applicable to any expression or claim to truth. For Lacan, the role of a myth is to cover up this impossibility (the impossibility of avoiding contradiction) at the center of the myth as it tries to mend two opposing and contradicting premises. This covering of this impossibility gives rise to a "bit of meaning" in the form of a fiction. It is in this fictional aspect that much contention, ridicule, and most often even its dismissal arises. This is why Lacan (2007) writes, "One can bullshit a lot [around] myths, because it is precisely the field of bullshitting" (111, translation adjusted)<sup>108</sup>. Even in 'bullshitting', there is an element of truth, just as there is an element of truth in a lie. For Lacan, it is in the attempt to express truth - truth which is always a half-saying - that there is an emergent fiction, which can be constituted as 'bullshitting'. For Lacan, this can also be said of the treatment of dreams, whereby one has to delve through all the fiction and imagination from which one has to deduce a meaning. For Lacan, there is an impossible relationship between reconciling the half-saying [truth] and the contradictory half-saying [truth] and the subsequent surrounding irrelevancies.<sup>109</sup>

It is in this regard that Grigg draws comparisons between science and myths, and how Lacan distinguishes between the two. Grigg (2006) writes; "Science cannot write the impossible, any more than myth can say it; here they are on common ground" (55). Whereas myth focuses on the spoken word, science focuses on writing in its implementation of mathematics and the stripping away of - as Lacan put it - the bullshit.

This is the context through which Lacan rereads the Oedipus complex and *Totem and Taboo* when he proposes to interpret the Oedipus complex in light of Freud's (1900) *Interpretations of Dreams*. In treating the Oedipus complex as a myth, Lacan is focusing on its

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<sup>108</sup> *On peut beaucoup déconner autour du mythe, parce que c'est justement le champ du déconnage.* (Lacan 1991:127).

<sup>109</sup> For example, Lévi-Strauss depicts the Oedipus complex as two contrary (half-truths), namely, "autochthonous origins" and "how is one born from two?" Yet, to convey these half-truths, it takes on the form of a fiction that is considered to be the surrounding irrelevancies.

latent content as opposed to the latent content. That is essentially Lacan's definition of a myth, "What is a myth? Don't all answer at once. It's a manifest content" (113)<sup>110</sup>. In *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud distinguished between manifest content and latent content. Manifest content refers to the actual, literal subject matter of the dream, whereas the latent content refers to the underlying meaning of the dream. Therefore, on Freud's treatment of the Sophoclean version of Oedipus, Lacan writes; "The Oedipus complex as it is recounted by Freud when he refers to Sophocles is not at all treated like a myth. It's Sophocles' story minus, as you will see, its tragic component" (113).

So far, this section has discussed the shift in Lacan's treatment of the Oedipus complex, as based on his understanding of myths as a continuation of the work of Lévi-Strauss. This leads to a discussion on the distinction between the treatments of myths and dreams.

#### 2.3.4. Myths or Dreams

There are far reaching consequences for the treatment of the Oedipus complex as a result of the distinction between treating it as either a dream or a myth. Lacan is not collapsing the difference between myths and dreams, and saying that myths should be treated as a dream, nor that dreams should be treated as myths. The consequences of Lacan's subsequent treatment of the Oedipus complex are summarized when Grigg (2006) writes as follows;

A dream is not a myth, however, and if Lacan is right in thinking that the Oedipus complex was 'Freud's dream', then the Oedipus complex is not a myth either. If it is a dream then it will have been formed according to different laws. (56)

Grigg goes on to illustrate what he means when he expresses that a dream is not a myth. In Freud's work, dreams are a product of the "formation" of the unconscious. The dream work therefore distorts

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<sup>110</sup> *Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un mythe? Ne répondez pas tous à la fois. C'est un contenu manifeste* (Lacan, 1991:130).



and conceals the latent content, which is the underlying meaning of the dream, achieved through the two coding processes dictated by condensation and displacement.<sup>111</sup> Condensation refers to the ability of the dream-work to fuse into a single action, whereas displacement of the dream results in the dream-content no longer resembling the dream-thoughts. This is also akin to the linguistic operations that Lacan emphasizes, namely, metaphor and metonymy.<sup>112</sup> Metaphor is not the same as analogy, as Lacan (2006) defines metaphor in *Écrits*. The classic definition for metaphor, Lacan writes, is "one word for another: this is the formula for metaphor" (422). However, for Lacan, metaphor is not merely replacing one word for another, but a result of the interplay between the words that produce the metaphoric creation.<sup>113</sup> Metonymy, on the other hand, functions similarly to metaphor, but differs in a fundamental way. Metonymy,<sup>114</sup> refers to the ability of words to create meaning outside of their intention. Lacan (2006) defines metonymy when he writes, "I shall designate as metonymy the first aspect of the actual field the signifier constitutes, so that meaning may assume a place" (421). Metonymy is therefore a 'special temporal structure' (Lacan, 1998b: 176) that allows for additional information to surface between the two signifiers that was not necessarily intended. This also explains why metaphor and metonymy are applicable to dream work since it

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<sup>111</sup> Freud (1900) writes, "Dream-displacement and dream-condensation are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams" (343).

<sup>112</sup> Lacan (2008) writes, "Already at the level of the unconscious there exists an organization that, as Freud says, is not necessarily that of contradiction or of grammar, but the laws of condensation and displacement those that I call the laws of metaphor and metonymy" (74).

<sup>113</sup> Lacan (2006) writes about metaphor, which is a rather technical discussion, "Metaphor's creative spark does not spring forth from the juxtaposition of two images, that is, of two equally actualized signifiers. It flashes between two signifiers, one of which has replaced the other by taking the other's place in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present by virtue of its (metonymic) connection to the rest of the chain" (422).

<sup>114</sup> Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) define metonymy as follows: "Metonymy is in fact a type of metaphor where that which is factually intended is not referred to directly, but inversely, is indicated through another word or concept that belongs to the same semantic context" [*De metonymie is inderdaad een sort beeldspraak waarbij datgene wat feitelijk bedoeld word niet rechtstreeks genoemd wordt, maar integendeel aangeduid wordt met behulp van een ander woord of begrip dat tot dezelfde semantische context behoort*] (121n7, my translation).

allows for the dream-displacement and dream-condensation to take place.

Therefore, the difference between dreams and myths can be summarized as follows: Dreams have displacement and condensation, which for Lacan functions in the same way as metaphor and metonymy. Myths, in comparison, lack this dynamic underlying structure that can be ascribed to unconscious structures. Lacan grew increasingly aware of the limitations of Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myths in comparison with dream analysis. Lacan (2007) writes:

It's simply that, seeing how Freud articulates this fundamental myth, it is clear that it is truly incorrect to put everything in the same basket as Oedipus. What in God's name, so to speak, does Moses have to do with Oedipus and the father of the primal horde? (117)

In other words, what Lacan finds striking is how there are many interpreters of Freud who are collapsing the distinction between these three different articles, starting with *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). What Lacan is consequently proposing is to look at each text individually, rather than through an umbrella concept that is the Oedipus complex. For example, the murder of the father of the primal horde is compared to an Oedipal schema. For Lacan, in his later writing<sup>115</sup>, there is no comparison between the Oedipus complex and the murder of the father of the primal horde<sup>116</sup> as was also discussed and illustrated in Chapter 1. This raises the question as to why Freud holds onto the Oedipus complex as ferociously as he does. The predominant difference between the Oedipus complex and the myth of

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<sup>115</sup> In Lacan's earlier writing, for example, in *Écrits* (2006), he collapses the distinction between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde, yet in *The Other side of Psychoanalysis* (2007), Lacan clearly discerns between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde.

<sup>116</sup> Lacan (2007) writes, "There is the myth of Oedipus, then, borrowed from Sophocles. And then there is the cock-and-bull story I was speaking about earlier, the murder of the father of the primal horde. It is quite curious that the result is exactly the contrary" (114) [*Il y a donc ce mythe d'Oedipe, emprunté à Sophocle. Et puis, il y a l'histoire à dormir debout don't je vous parlais tout à l'heure, le meurtre du père de la horde primitive. Il est assez curieux que le résultat en soit exactement le contraire*] (Lacan, 1991: 131).

the father of the primal horde is the inversion between the law and desire. The Oedipus complex explains how desire is regulated by the law in as much as the father is seen as a representation of the law, whereas in the myth of the father of the primal horde, the law is a result of the murder of the father. In both cases there are contradictory outcomes<sup>117</sup>, yet the universal property in both explanations was the role of the father. Lacan suggests that this has to do with Freud wanting to save the father.

## 2.4. Saving the Father

In Lacan's discussion of the Oedipus complex, he focuses primarily on three texts of Freud, namely, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') (1905a), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). As was argued in Chapter 1, there is a progression in Freud's work which would explain why there is such a gap between the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde<sup>118</sup>. Therefore, this section will focus on each of these three texts individually, specifically focussing on Lacan's reading of each text, and how his reading of these texts show that Freud ascribes a value to the father, and his role, that supersedes his actual role. This is essentially what is meant with 'saving the father', saving both his title and his role. But as will be argued, the saving of the father comes at a price, as the father's fallibility and temporality are concealed and obscured.

### 2.4.1. *Totem and Taboo*

Lacan's reading of Freud's (1913) *Totem and Taboo* in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007) focuses on the description and depiction of

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<sup>117</sup> Grigg (2006) writes, "Both the Oedipus myth 'borrowed from Sophocles' and the primal-horde myth involve the murder of the father, but the consequences of this murder are exactly opposite in the two cases, and the reason for this is the difference place occupied by the law in each" (61).

<sup>118</sup> Grigg (2006) writes, "On this view the Oedipus complex would be the myth that Freud creates in response to the clinic of hysteria; the myth of the primal-horde father of *Totem and Taboo* his response to the clinic of obsessional neurosis. I think this is, in rough terms, Lacan's view in *Seminar XVII*." (62)

the father. For Lacan, it remains an issue that Freud needs to explain why he holds so tenaciously onto the all-powerful father. In *Totem and Taboo* there is the all powerful father who owns all the women, while in clinical practice, the father can be weak. Lacan's correction of the Oedipus complex does not account for, or validate, Freud's overemphasis of the father when the mother's desire is emphasized and depicted as all-consuming (as argued in Section 2.3.1.).

Verhaeghe (2006b) argues in favour of Lacan's correction of the Oedipus complex and mentions the example of Little Hans<sup>119</sup>. Verhaeghe summarizes the basic Freudian model as "the child longing for the mother; the severe castration threatening and forbidding father; the child thereby renouncing his desire" (40). Yet this model often clashes with the clinical picture. To summarize, Verhaeghe shows that Little Hans was confronted with an invasion of enjoyment, but does not know how to handle it. Lacan's correction of the Oedipus complex is reinforced in Verhaeghe's explanation, when he writes; "He [Little Hans] associates the threat arising from his own enjoyment with his mother and looks to his father for protection" (40)<sup>120</sup>. Therefore, in Lacan's correction of the Oedipus complex, the father frees Little Hans from the mother's desire and allows for a desire of his own.

This is where Freud's Oedipus complex reaches a contradiction between the Oedipal father (the strong, prohibiting father) as opposed to and against the weak fathers he encounters in his clinical practice. It is then suggested that Freud introduces *Totem and Taboo* to solve this inconsistency.<sup>121</sup> The outcome being that Freud devised the myth of the primal horde as a way to save this image of the strong, prohibiting father. Therefore, even if the

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<sup>119</sup> Freud discusses the case study of Little Hans in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (1909a). This case study is also dealt within Section 1.4 under the heading of *Totem and Taboo*.

<sup>120</sup> Verhaeghe rewords the idea expressed in Section 2.3.1. in terms of the mother's desire as the jaws that threaten to close on the child, and how the father is a defence against the mother's all-consuming desire.

<sup>121</sup> Verhaeghe (2006b) writes; "In *Totem and Taboo*, he will try to solve this inconsistency through a self-invented myth that is designed to save the Oedipal father, that is, his image of this figure" (40).

child doesn't have a strong, prohibiting father, he can always call on this primordial father.

However, this strong, prohibiting father also happens to be the dead father. Lacan (2007) writes, "But in the statement of the myth of *Totem and Taboo*, the Freudian myths draws an equivalence between the dead father and *jouissance*" (123)<sup>122</sup>. In other words, it is only when the father is dead that enjoyment is accessible to the sons, that the death of the father should lift the embargo. However, as is the case in *Totem and Taboo*, the death of the father only enforces his law. Or as Lacan writes;

Here the myth transcends itself through stating in the name of the real - for this is what Freud insists upon, that it actually happened, that it is the real - that the dead father is what guards *jouissance*, is where the prohibition of *jouissance* started, where it stemmed from.<sup>123</sup> (123)

Hecq (2006) elaborates on the above passage. In *Totem and Taboo* there is the hypothesis posited by Freud: The father of the primal horde owns all the women and was subsequently killed by his sons. Once the father is dead, he incarnates this prohibition. This is evident when Freud (1913) writes, "*The dead father became stronger than the living one had been*" (143, my italics). This movement from life to death in *Totem and Taboo* resembles the "movement from prevention to prohibition" (Hecq, 2006: 223). The *jouissance* referred to in *Totem and Taboo* is therefore the father's *jouissance* that also happens to be prohibited to the sons. For Lacan, the move here also establishes and emphasizes the connection between language and death. Lacan (2007) writes, "The fact that the dead father is *jouissance* presents itself to us as the sign of the impossible itself" (123)<sup>124</sup>. This introduces the important distinction that Lacan makes between the real, symbolic, and imaginary father. The

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<sup>122</sup> Mais dans l'énoncé du mythe de Totem et Tabou, le mythe freudien, c'est l'équivalence du père mort et de la jouissance (Lacan, 1991:143).

<sup>123</sup> Ici, le mythe se transcende, d'énonce au titre du réel - car c'est là ce sur quoi Freud insiste - que ça c'est passé réellement, que c'est le réel, que le père mort est ce qui a la garde de la jouissance, est ce d'où est parti l'interdit de la jouissance, d'où elle a procédé (Lacan, 1991:143).

<sup>124</sup> Que le père mort soit la jouissance se présente à nous comme le signe de l'impossible (Lacan, 1991: 143).

difference between each exists in their depiction of the father. The living father is the symbolic father, whereas each individual characteristic attributed to the father is connected to the imaginary father. The real father, however, is located in that impossible depiction of the dead father's *jouissance*. Lacan (2007) emphasizes this connection between the dead father and the *jouissance* of *Totem and Taboo* when he writes, "But in the statement of the myth of *Totem and Taboo*, the Freudian myth draws an equivalence between the dead father and *jouissance*. This is what we can describe with the term 'structural operator'" (123). Therefore, the real father (the dead father as guardian of *jouissance*) is a structural operator, which means that the real father is also the agent of castration. This real father, as Hecq (2006) points out, is distinct from the castrating father, namely the imaginary father<sup>125</sup>. Therefore, Hecq concludes that for Lacan, the real father is reduced to this very function, to symbolize castration<sup>126</sup>. This is only achieved because he is called father, that he is a name, and in that name he is a father. The impossibility of the myth of *Totem and Taboo* is that one cannot kill a name, that even after murdering the father of this primal-horde, his law and his *jouissance* remain.

Lacan (2007) returns to Freud's (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams*: "In Freud's own words *The Interpretation of Dreams* emerged from his father's death. Freud thus [considered himself] to be guilty for his father's death" (122, translation adjusted).<sup>127</sup> Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) explain that Freud's guilt regarding his own father's death is a central component that forms the foundation of *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Consequently, this guilt manifests as a historical event in Freud's writing, evident in his treatment of the death of the father as a theme in *Totem and Taboo* as well as *Moses and Monotheism*. Lacan writes,

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<sup>125</sup> Hecq (2006) writes, "The real father, then, is the agent of castration - which has nothing to do with the fantasy of the castrating father, the imaginary father" (223).

<sup>126</sup> Lacan (2007) affirms this argument when he writes, "The father, the real father, is none other than the agent of castration - and this is what affirming the real father as impossible is destined to mask from us" (125).

<sup>127</sup> *Au dire meme de Freud, L'Interprétation des rêves a surgi de la mort de son père. Ainsi Freud se veut-il coupable de la mort de son père* (Lacan, 1991:141).

What is there to conceal? That, as soon as the father enters the field of the master's discourse where we are in the process of orientating ourselves, he is, from the origins, castrated.<sup>128</sup> (101)

Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) conclude that, according to Lacan, Freud is introducing the theme of the murder of the father in *Totem and Taboo* as an attempt to conceal the castration of the father – both his fallibility and his temporal existence.<sup>129</sup> In other words, the death of the father is the manifest content, whereby Freud's own guilt for the death of his father, conceals the latent content, namely, that the father is castrated.

The historic outline of the development of the Oedipus complex, as discussed in Chapter 1, illustrates that Freud's discussion on the role of the father starts with the death of his own father, and even admitted as much in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)<sup>130</sup>. Freud only returns to a discussion on the father in *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* ('Ratman') (1909b), where the relationship between the Ratman and his father is rather striking. Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) develops the two ideas mentioned in the Ratman, namely the ambivalent feelings towards the father that is captured in the father-complex and the depiction of the father as the interferer with desire. Therefore, there is a link between Freud's depiction of the father and obsessional neurosis. To return to the text by Verhaeghe (2006b), he writes, "In fact, what he is doing here is giving form to neurotic desire and elevating it, moreover, to a supposedly historical reality" (40). Even Grigg (2006) alludes to this connection between the myth of the primal horde and obsessional neurosis and how the Oedipus complex is connected to

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<sup>128</sup> *Que s'agit-il de dissimuler? C'est que, dès lors qu'il entre dans le champ du discours du maître où nous sommes en train de nous orienter, le père, dès l'origine, est castré* (Lacan, 1991:115).

<sup>129</sup> Van Haute and Geyskens (2010) write, "Zowel Freuds introductie van het thema van de moord op de vader, als deze droom en her oorsprongsverhaal uit *Totem en Taboe* getuigen volgens Lacan van een poging om de castratie van de vader – zijn wezenlijke beperktheid en sterfelijkheid – te verdoezelen" (139).

<sup>130</sup> Freud (1900) writes; "It was, I found a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death – that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life. Having discovered that this was so, I felt unable to obliterate the traces of the experience" (xxvi).

hysteria<sup>131</sup>. Lacan suggest that Freud should have realized his own dream - elevating his own father to the almighty father - in his dealings with the hysteric<sup>132</sup>. To support this claim, Lacan focuses predominantly on the case of Dora and why Freud failed in his attempts at treatment. Dora is presented in Freud's (1905a) *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora'). The next section will focus on Lacan's reading of the Dora case that also epitomizes how the master is, from the beginning, castrated.

#### 2.4.2. Dora

Lacan's reading of Freud's (1905a) *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ('Dora') builds on the previous section, as Lacan uses the Dora case-study to illustrate the consequences of Freud holding on to the father as an all powerful figure despite the contradiction in his clinical experience where the father can be weak. Lacan focuses on the relationship between the hysteric, in this instance, Dora, and the relationship to the father. However, what is pivotal for Lacan, and this will be illustrated in this section, is the status of the father. Lacan (2007) writes; "why not begin with the fact that Dora's father, the pivotal point of the entire adventure, or misadventure, is strictly a castrated man" (95)<sup>133</sup>.

Lacan, from the outset, is critical of Freud's treatment of the Dora case. Most notably on Freud's insistence that Dora desired Herr K, rather than realizing that Frau K was the object of Dora's desire<sup>134</sup>. For Lacan, what is at stake is the structure of desire, particularly in terms of identifying the hysteric's desire. Freud will therefore inevitably fail, as Grigg (2006) summarizes, "For what he had also

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<sup>131</sup> Grigg (2006), "On this view the Oedipus complex would be the myth that Freud creates in response to the clinic of hysteria; the myth of the primal-horde father of *Totem and Taboo* his response to the clinic of obsessional neurosis" (62).

<sup>132</sup> Lacan (2007) writes, "However, the experience with the hysteric, if not her sayings, at least the configurations when presented him with, should have guided him better here than the Oedipus complex does" (101).

<sup>133</sup> *pourquoi ne pas partir du fait que le père de Dora, point-pivot de toute l'aventure, ou mésaventure, est proprement un homme châtré* (Lacan, 1991:108).

<sup>134</sup> The critique of the Dora case study is discussed at greater length in Section 1.6.



failed to grasp was the place and significance of the structure of desire in hysteria and in particular the role played in it by a desire for an unsatisfied desire" (62). This leads Freud to search for the hysteric's object of desire, but because of his own preconceived ideas on sexuality, as well as his inability to understand the hysteric's structure of desire, identified a man as Dora's object of desire. Dora continually rejected this hypothesis. This is where Freud imbeds the Oedipus complex in explaining the hysteric's desire, in as much as Freud's 'solution' to the hysteric's lack, namely, as Grigg writes; "that a woman can never be fully satisfied until she has filled this lack by receiving the phallus and, moreover, by receiving it from the father" (63). Freud's solution was consequently motherhood, and kept on insisting on this throughout his treatment of the hysteric. This is why Freud relentlessly pursues to get Dora to acknowledge her desire for her father and Herr K.

However, as Lacan's reading of the Dora case study shows, the relationship between Dora and her father is greatly influenced by the fact that Dora knew of her father's impotence.<sup>135</sup> This is, for Lacan, significant as a sign that the father is in a way deficient when he is measured against a symbolic, ideal function of the father. The father's impotence typifies his castration. Therefore, on the one hand, there is this figure of the idealized father, and on the other, there is the hysteric's desire. The father cannot be the object of desire for the hysteric, as Freud suggest, since the hysteric already knows that the father is lacking, i.e. castrated.

However, Lacan still defends the father with all his imperfections and deficiencies. For Lacan (2007) this is predominately possible through the name 'father'; "It is implicitly to proffer that the father is not merely what he is, that it is a title like 'ex-soldier' - he is an 'ex-sire'. He is a father, like the ex-soldier, until the end of his life" (95).<sup>136</sup> Yet, Lacan does explain Dora's

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<sup>135</sup> Freud doesn't speak of the impotence of Dora's father, in fact, Freud's depiction of Dora's father makes no reference to his impotence.

<sup>136</sup> *C'est proférer implicitement que le père n'est pas seulement ce qu'il est, que c'est un titre comme ancien combattant - c'est ancien géniteur.*

fascination with Frau K as a product of her relationship towards her father. In spite of her father's lack, it is still his relation to Frau K that fascinates Dora. In other words, Dora is fascinated in Frau K in as much as Frau K holds her father's attention in spite of his impotence. In Lacan's own words;

It is Frau K who knows how to sustain the idealized father's desire, but also how to contain the respondent, if I can put it like this, and at the same time how to deprive Dora of it, who thus finds herself doubly removed from his grasp. (96)

For Lacan, Dora's fascination with Frau K leads to two very specific questions: "What is a woman?", and, more specifically, "What do women want"? (129)<sup>137</sup>. This is also why Lacan calls Dora the 'third man' even though the case study only incorporates two men, her father and Herr K. Lacan (2007) writes,

Well, why 'the third man'? To be sure, it's the organ which gives him [Herr K] his price, not so that Dora can find happiness in it, if I can put it thus, but so that another woman should deprive [Dora] of it.<sup>138</sup> (96, translation adjusted)

Dora's fascination with Frau K is entrenched in this question, "What is a woman?"<sup>139</sup> Dora gazes at Frau K, as a man would, to find the answer to the question, "What is a woman? and more importantly, "What do women want?" Dora is hoping that she can find the solution to her own sexuality from Frau K, because of Frau K's relation to her father. Dora's fascination with Herr K, however, is in terms of the phallus which is 'the organ which gives him [Herr K] his price'. Lacan brings attention to the jewellery box that Herr K gave Dora as a gift. Lacan relates this to the first dream<sup>140</sup> that occurred a few

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*Il est père, comme l'ancien combattant, jusqu'à la fin de sa vie* (Lacan, 1991:108).

<sup>137</sup> *Que veut une femme?* (Lacan, 1991:150).

<sup>138</sup> *Alors, pourquoi le troisième homme? Certes, c'est l'organe qui fait son prix, mais pas pour que Dora en fasse son Bonheur, si je puis dire - pour qu'une autre l'en prive* (Lacan, 1991:109).

<sup>139</sup> Ragland (2006) states the same differently when she writes, "But, I would say that it is not Dora's identification with Frau K per se that is at issue [...], but the identification each has with the woman in question in relation to her father's desire" (70).

<sup>140</sup> The first dream is summarized by Van Haute and Geyskens (2010a), "In this first dream, Dora is awakened by her father when the house is on fire.

days after the scene at the lake (Freud, 1905a:64)<sup>141</sup>. Lacan (2007) writes, which illustrates why it is a conceptual issue for Dora, i.e. that Dora has to make sense of; "The first dream, the one called the dream of the jewel box, bears this out - it isn't the jewel, it's the box, the envelope of the precious organ, there you have the only thing she gets *jouissance* out of" (96).<sup>142</sup> In Freud's discussion of the jewellery box, he had made the comparison between jewellery and the female sexual organ, which Lacan takes further. For Lacan, Dora's curiosity surrounding the jewellery box is a conceptual question. This emphasizes her question to female sexuality, and more importantly, as already mentioned, "What do woman want?" (Lacan, 2007:129). This question refers to Dora's own questioning to her own role, her own sexuality, and her own desire as a woman.

The issue at hand, for Lacan, is the hysteric and the conceptual problem of female sexuality. Dora is consequently looking for an answer to her sexuality, but wants this answer from the master<sup>143</sup>. For Lacan, Dora "wants a master" (Lacan, 2007: 129), but at the same time, Dora is very specific about the role and position of this master. Dora wants a master to solve her problem regarding the conceptualization of female sexuality; but the hysteric has one condition, as Lacan continues, "In other words, she wants a master

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Her mother doesn't want to leave the house without saving her jewellery box. But Dora's father refuses and says: 'I refuse to let myself and my two children be burnt for the sake of your jewel-case' (1905a: 64). When asked about this dream, Dora tells Freud about a fight between her parents about a piece of jewellery. Her mother wanted a pearl to wear in her ears and her father gave her a bracelet instead. Freud, then, introduces a link between the 'jewel-case' (and jewellery in general) and female genitals (1905a: 69)" (8).

<sup>141</sup> The scene at the lake is also discussed in greater length in Section 1.6.

<sup>142</sup> *Le premier rêve, celui dit de la boîte à bijoux, en témoigne - ce n'est pas le bijou, c'est la boîte, l'enveloppe du précieux organe, viola seulement ce dont elle jouit* (Lacan, 1991:109).

<sup>143</sup> Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) elucidate the relationship between the hysteric and the master. The master can be anyone that would maintain the hysteric outside of the realm of desire, for example, priest, a teacher, a therapist, etc. The hysteric always chooses the master with great care, especially one that is outside of reach, in order to maintain the infatuation in order to avoid becoming an object of desire for the master. "De hysterica 'kiest' haar meesters dan ook met zorg. Het zijn objecten die 'buiten bereik' zijn - de priester, de psychoanalyticus of een leraar - zodat het hysterische subject een tijd lang de schijn kan hooghouden dat ze als het ware 'boven' of 'buiten' het verlangen staan" (148).

she can reign over. She reigns, and he does not govern" (129)<sup>144</sup>. In practical terms, what happens is that the hysteric asks the master what the object of her desire is, and every proposal is rejected. Just as Freud proposed to Dora that she loves Herr K, Dora rejects it. Each answer remains incomplete to the fundamental question the hysteric is really asking, namely "*What is a woman?*" In other words, the hysteric is asking, what is a woman outside and independent of a reference to a phallic signifier. This phallic signifier denotes the two traumatic instances, when Herr K tried to kiss her and declared his love for her<sup>145</sup>. Therefore, Dora is inquiring about female sexuality, independent of being an object of desire for the phallus<sup>146</sup>.

But as Lacan shows, this is already a paradoxical situation, because the hysteric, Dora, always rejects the solutions from the master for the reason that she wants to know, but does not want to be the object of his desire. Lacan (2007) writes,

She, [the hysteric], in her own way, goes on a kind of strike. She doesn't give up her knowledge. She unmasks, however, the master's function, with which she remains united, by emphasizing what there is of the master in what is the One with a capital "O", which she evades in her capacity as object of his desire.<sup>147</sup> (94)

By going on strike, the hysteric does not divulge her knowledge, and therefore, the hysteric and the master reach a deadlock. Yet, the hysteric relies on the master's input, but continually refutes and

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<sup>144</sup> *Autrement dit, elle veut un maître sur lequel elle règne. Elle règne, et il ne gouverne pas* (Lacan, 1991:150).

<sup>145</sup> The two traumatic incidents referred to, were when Dora was 14 years old and 16 years old respectively. The first incident occurred at Herr K's shop, and the second incident happened at the lake. These incidents are discussed in greater detail in section 1.6.

<sup>146</sup> Defining sexuality remains a problem for Freud, and every attempt at defining sexuality continually returns to the phallus as the only mutually accessible reference for bridging both male and female sexuality. Derrida's critique of defining sexuality through a reference to the phallus is that the phallus is treated as a transcendental signifier. In other words, sexuality cannot be conceived of outside of any reference to the phallus.

<sup>147</sup> *Elle fait à sa façon une certaine grève. Elle ne livre pas son savoir. Elle démasque pourtant la fonction du maître dont elle reste solidaire, en mettant en valeur ce qu'il y a de maître dans ce qui est l'Un avec un grand U, dont elle se soustrait à titre d'objet de son désir* (Lacan, 1991: 107).

negates anything the master proposes. For Lacan, this also helps explain why Freud's attempts at treatment failed. The quickest explanation of the treatment of Dora was the hysteric (Dora) asking the master (Freud), "What do I desire?" Freud would answer, "You desire Herr K, or your father", which Dora continually refutes and rejects, till she eventually called off the treatment. Lacan's explanation for the failing of Freud is best captured when he writes,

It is quite true that at this moment the Other's *jouissance* is offered her, and she doesn't want to have anything to do with it because what she wants is knowledge as the means of *jouissance*, but in order to place this knowledge in the service of truth, the truth of the master that she embodies as Dora.<sup>148</sup> (97)

Lacan's argument essentially emphasizes how Dora couldn't accede to Freud's solutions, but also that Freud didn't know what to offer Dora. The hysteric has a very interesting relation to the master, in as much as the hysteric wants the attention of the master, but also wants to evade the classification of the master. The hysteric is able to maintain a distance from the master in that the hysteric is in possession of a truth. Dora was in possession of a truth that prevented her from fully accepting Freud's therapy. This dynamic between the hysteric and the master, or Dora and Freud, comes full circle for Lacan. What is it that Dora knows about the master, as Lacan writes; "And this truth, to say it at last, is that the master is castrated" (97)<sup>149</sup>.

The historic understanding of the development of the Oedipus complex - as discussed in Chapter 1, and argued by Grigg (2006) - argue for the distinction between the myth of the primal horde and obsessional neurosis, and the Oedipus complex and hysteria. Unfortunately, Grigg never elaborates on the connection between the Oedipus complex and

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<sup>148</sup> *Il est très vrai qu'à ce moment-là, la jouissance de l'utère s'offre à elle, et elle n'en veut pas, parce que ce qu'elle veut, c'est le savoir comme moyen de la jouissance, mais pour le faire servir à la vérité du maître qu'elle incarne, en tant que Dora* (Lacan, 1991: 110).

<sup>149</sup> *Et cette vérité, pour la dire enfin, c'est que le maître est châtré* (Lacan, 1991: 110).

Freud's conceptualization of hysteria. If Freud is protecting the role of the father for the hysteric, how would the Oedipus complex achieve this? Freud continually forced the hysteric into a heterosexual structure of desire, whereby the hysteric's desire is connected to her father. Therefore, the Oedipus complex is introduced, according to Grigg, to explain the hysteric's desire.

The two predominant features of the hysteric are, as Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) summarize, the aversion to sexuality and uncertainty surrounding gender identification<sup>150</sup>. The hysteric is consequently split between masculine and feminine gender identification. The female hysteric refuses to accede to the mother's feminine role, as the hysteric would then just assent to the expected gender role. In her defiance, the female hysteric then turns to the father. Therefore, to quote Ragland (2006), "The hysteric creates herself in conformity with what she imagines her father's desire to be - creates herself for his gaze" (77). For Lacan, this explains why Freud introduced the notion of penis envy [*penisneid*] as an attempt to explain and understand the hysteric's desire in light of the father's desire<sup>151</sup>. This is where Lacan pinpoints Freud's error in the treatment of hysterics and why the Oedipus complex should be read as an explanation in light of the hysteric's desire. Lacan (2007) writes, "Why did he substitute this myth, the Oedipus complex, for the knowledge that he gathered from all these mouths of gold, Anna, Emma, Dora?"<sup>152</sup> (99).<sup>153</sup> What Freud was trying to achieve in his treatment of the hysteric, was to engage her with her traumatic confrontation with her ambivalent sexuality so that the hysteric can realize that penis envy, narcissism, and homosexuality are only one of many possible

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<sup>150</sup> Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) write, "Naast de afwijzing van de seksualiteit, wordt de histerie zo gekarakteriseerd door een structurele onzekerheid van de genderidentificaties" (62).

<sup>151</sup> Lacan (2007) writes, "[...] that everything he [Freud] was ever able to do for hysterics ends in nothing other than what he pins down as *Penisneid*?" (99).

<sup>152</sup> The three figures Lacan mention are Anna O and Emma von N discussed in Josef Breuer and Freud's (1895) *Studies on Hysteria* and Dora in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905a).

<sup>153</sup> *Pourquoi substitue-t-ill au savoir qu'il a recueilli de toutes ces bouches d'or, Anna, Emmie, Dora, ce mythe, le complexe d'Oedipe* (Lacan, 1991: 112-3).

reactions to this traumatic encounter. Freud's treatment involved the hysteric realizing that there were other, more responsible, options available for her to react to her confrontation with the differences in gender identification<sup>154</sup>.

In short, Freud is dealing with the hysteric's ambivalence towards her own sexuality, and tries to explain the hysterics object-choice of desire through the Oedipus complex. Unfortunately, as found in Freud's later writing<sup>155</sup>, Freud's overemphasis on the role of the father renders it impossible for him to realize that bisexuality is really at stake for the hysteric. Freud only recognized the attention to the father's object choice and how that resonated with the hysteric, for example, in Dora and her father's relation to Frau K. Freud is consequently inscribing the Oedipus complex as a means of 'saving the father', and placing the father at the center of the hysteric's narrative, instead of acknowledging that it is the father's desire that Dora desires, and not the father himself.

#### **2.4.3. Moses and Monotheism**

Freud's (1939) *Moses and Monotheism* is often depicted as a variation of the myth of the primal horde presented in Freud's (1913) *Totem and Taboo*. Lacan's interest in the text lies with two questions, "What in God's name, so to speak, does Moses have to do with Oedipus and the father of the primal horde?"<sup>156</sup> (117) and "How, why did Freud need Moses?" (137)<sup>157</sup>. The most basic explanation, for Lacan, is that

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<sup>154</sup> The treatment of the hysteric is discussed in Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b), "Het doel van de therapie bestaat er volgens deze opvatting in om haar terug te brengen bij de traumatische confrontatie met het geslachtsverschil, zodat ze kan ontdekken dat haar reactie van penisnijd, narcisme en homoseksualiteit slechts één van de mogelijke reacties op dit trauma was, en dat ze nu kan kiezen voor een andere, "gezondere" of "meer volwassen" manier om met het geslachtsverschil om te gaan" (89).

<sup>155</sup> Freud's initial depiction of the Dora case study was far more concerned about the nature of bisexuality, evidenced in *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905b), published the same year as *Fragment of an analysis of a case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a). It was only in the later adaptations that Freud drops bisexuality and focuses on the father.

<sup>156</sup> *Qu'est-ce que Moïse, foutre de nom de Dieu - c'est le cas de le dire -, a à faire avec Oedipe et le père de la horde primitive?* (Lacan, 1991:135).

<sup>157</sup> *Comment, pourquoi, Freud a-t-il eu besoin de Moïse* (Lacan, 1991:160).

murder in the myth of the primal horde introduces and entrenches the notion of guilt. If Moses<sup>158</sup> was murdered, then *Moses and Monotheism* is a continuation of his discussion of the origins of religion, whereby the death of Moses and the subsequent guilt only entrenched the laws he introduced (for example, the Ten Commandments). There are three texts that provide important clues to the treatment of *Moses and Monotheism*, namely, by MacCannell, Verhaeghe, and Grigg.

MacCannell (2006) explains how *Moses and Monotheism* ties in with the Oedipus complex and *Totem and Taboo*. All three examples, the Oedipus myth, *Totem and Taboo*, and *Moses and Monotheism*, list the consequences of the death of the father, and how the consequences results in the entrenchment of the law. In the Oedipus complex, it was after Oedipus finds out that he had slept with his mother, and fulfilled the prediction by the Oracle, that Oedipus loses his eyes (as a symbolic castration), and as a result saves the city. In *Totem and Taboo*, after the murder of the father, there is a communally shared guilt and regret. In the end, the self-castration by the brothers salvages the community. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Moses was murdered after passing God's laws onto his people, and as a result placed a parricide ["restriction on paternal enjoyment" (211)] that saved and preserved the religion. In all three instances, the position of the father is exalted, and the consequence of his murder entrenches his *jouissance*. This is as far as MacCannell's text is helpful in elucidating the connection between the Oedipus complex, *Totem and Taboo*, and *Moses and Monotheism*.

Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism*, depicts the transition from Judaism to Christianity. For Freud, it was worth noticing how the new religion dealt with the ancient ambivalence in relation to the father. Freud (1939) writes,

Its main content was, it is true, reconciliation with God the Father, atonement for the crime committed against him; but the other side of the emotional relation showed itself in the fact

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<sup>158</sup> This Moses is the turning point from polytheistic superstition to a monotheistic religion. As argued in Chapter 1.7, there are two Moseses, the Hebrew Moses who lead the Jewish slaves out of Egypt, and the Egyptian Moses who reformed religion in Egypt from polytheistic to monotheistic.



that the son, who had taken the atonement on himself, became a god himself beside the father and, actually, in place of the father. Christianity, having arisen out of a father-religion, became a son-religion. It has not escaped the fate of having to get rid of the father. (136)

For Freud, Christianity still has the myth of the primal horde at its core, but presents a variation to the version presented in *Totem and Taboo*. Christianity is not exempt from guilt, as this was the cornerstone of the new religion. "Original sin and redemption by the sacrifice of a victim became the foundational stones of the new religion founded by Paul" (Freud, 1939: 135). It was through this sacrifice that the son was elevated to the status of a god, and that the son is depicted as the great redeemer. The necessity of the son's sacrifice is the necessary condition for Christianity. Yet, according to Freud, it is because of the 'original sin', or the unnameable crime, that Freud refers to as the murder of the primal father. Christianity inherited this from Judaism, notably the consequences following the murder of Moses. The sacrifice of the son was necessitated to combat the laws that dominated Judaism, which according to Freud, was "driven by the need to satisfy this sense of guilt, which was insatiable and came from sources so much deeper, they must make those commandments grow ever stricter, more meticulous and even more trivial" (134). The son had to be sacrificed to relieve this guilt that Freud depicts as all consuming and overpowering.

Both Grigg (2006) and Verhaeghe (2006b) depict *Moses and Monotheism* as a continuation and variation of the myth of the primal horde. Verhaeghe continually affirms Lacan's correction of the Oedipus complex, whereby the Freudian schema is inverted so as to accommodate the mother's desire as central and the father as the opposing force to prevent the mother's desire from fully engulfing the child. However, Verhaeghe's explanation undermines the Oedipus complex as Freud's dream, and the fundamental trauma that underlies the Oedipus complex, namely, Freud coping with the loss and fallibility of his own father. Verhaeghe still only focus on the

manifest content, which is illustrated when he writes, "In the revised version of the myth (*Moses and Monotheism*), it is the youngest son who, in the face of a matriarchy, elevates the (meanwhile murdered) primal father to divine proportions" (41). Grigg's article isn't clear either on how *Moses and Monotheism* it is connected to the Oedipus complex and *Totem and Taboo*. From the little that Grigg says about *Moses and Monotheism*, he focuses, just like Verhaeghe, on combining the inversion of the Oedipus complex and the dominance of the father's desire to the mother's desire to explain the transition from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism*. Grigg (2006) writes, "At the outset the father's function is clearly to pacify, regulate and sublimate the omnipotence of the figure of the mother, called by Freud 'the obscure power of the feminine sex'" (65). He continues, "But by the end the father himself has assumed the power, the obscurity, and cruelty of the omnipotence his function was supposed to dissipate in the first place" (65). For Grigg and Verhaeghe, *Moses and Monotheism* stand to validate Lacan's correction of the Oedipus complex, so as to enforce the depiction of the father as the liberating force from the mother's desire that consequently allows the child to pursue a desire of their own. *Moses and Monotheism* therefore validate this explanation, in as much as Christianity is born from the liberation of this guilt when the son was sacrificed. The transition from Judaic law to Christian redemption is completed in the changeover from the Father to the Son. But as Lacan's argument shows, the abovementioned is merely manifest content.

Both Grigg and Verhaeghe still fail to reconcile this interpretation with Lacan's depiction of Freud's dream and his distinction between manifest content and latent content of dream interpretation. To recapitulate, the manifest content is the depiction of the father as all powerful, whereas the latent content refers to the underlying meaning. But how does God or Yahweh relate to Freud's (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams* and Freud's guilt following the passing of his father. For Lacan (2007), the link can be summarized as follows,

To be a father, I mean not only a real father but a father of the real, there are things that one must ferociously ignore.

One would, in a certain way, have to ignore everything that is not what last time I tried to set into my text as being of the level of structure, this level having to be defined as the order of the effects of language.<sup>159</sup> (135)

Lacan is referring to castration in a veiled manner. As was argued earlier in this chapter, the real father is the agent of castration<sup>160</sup>, that castration is "essentially a symbolic function" (124) and that for Lacan, castration is an effect of language. Therefore, what Lacan is referring to in the abovementioned quotation, is that the father has to be ferociously ignorant, but specifically, that the father – the real father, the dead father as guardian of *jouissance*, or the father as a structural operator – needs to be ferociously ignorant of the fact that he is castrated<sup>161</sup>. In other words, the father needs to be ignorant of the fact that he is fallible, weak, and not impervious to fault.

Therefore, in a cloaked way, Lacan is illustrating that the latent content of Freud's dream ties *Moses and Monotheism* with *Totem and Taboo* as a product of Freud's dealing with the death of his own father, as presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The latent content of Freud's dream is to protect the father from the knowledge of his own castration. Therefore, Lacan is arguing that *Moses and Monotheism* ignores the condition of the father, Yahweh, God, and the Son, being an all-powerful father, and that one has to

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<sup>159</sup> Pour être un père, j'entends non pas seulement un père réel, mais un père du réel, il y a assurément des choses qu'il faut féroce­ment ignorer. Il faudrait, d'une certain façon, tout ignorer de ce qui n'est pas ce que j'ai essayé de fixer la dernière fois dans mon texte comme le niveau de la structure, celui-ci étant à définir de l'ordre des effets du langage (Lacan, 1991: 157).

<sup>160</sup> The link between the real father and castration is evident when Lacan (2007) writes "The father, the real father, is none other than the agent of castration – and this is what affirming the real father as impossible is destined to mask from us" (125) and "The real father carries out the work of the master agency" (126).

<sup>161</sup> This depiction differs from Žižek's (2008) argument, whereby Žižek elucidates the fundamental difference between the father of *Totem and Taboo* and God of *Moses and Monotheism*. In *Totem and Taboo*, the father knows what he is prohibiting, whereas in *Moses and Monotheism*, God is ignorant of this *jouissance*, to quote Žižek, "I refuse to know, I do not want to hear, anything about your dirty and secret ways of *jouissance*" (382). Žižek relates this to the issue of sexuality and an understanding thereof that was banished by God. Hence, as was argued in Lévi-Strauss' structural study of the Oedipus complex, the underlying question still remains, "How is one born from two?"

be ignorant of one's own castration. This is captured when Lacan (2007) writes, to quote at length,

What is this indestructible desire Freud speaks of at the end of his *Traumdeutung*?<sup>162</sup> What is this desire that nothing can change or deflect when everything changes? The lack of forgetting is the same thing as the lack in being, since being is nothing other than forgetting. The love of truth is the love of this weakness whose veil we have lifted, it's the love of what truth hides, which is called castration.<sup>163</sup> (52)

In other words, Lacan is expressing that there are significant changes from the Oedipus complex, to *Totem and Taboo*, and *Moses and Monotheism*, but at base, there remains in Freud's depiction a desire to protect the image of the father. In protecting the image of the father, Freud has to cover the weakness of the father. It is because of the love of the father that the truth is concealed, and this truth is that the father is castrated.

## 2.5. Conclusion

Lacan became increasingly critical of the Oedipus complex, and of its subsequent justification in *Totem and Taboo* (§2.4.1.), *Moses and Monotheism* (§2.4.3), and the ensuing Oedipalization of Dora (§2.4.2.). They all contain contradictory explanations of the father. This forced Lacan to question whether Freud was referring throughout to the same father and whether the Oedipus complex could be a unifying feature.

Lacan proceeds to refer to the Oedipus complex as unusable and Freud's dream, which has severe implications for the implementation

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<sup>162</sup> Freud originally titled *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) as *Traumdeutung*.

<sup>163</sup> *Qu'est-ce que ce désir indestructible dont parle Freud pour conclure les dernières lignes de sa Traumdeutung? Qu'est-ce que ce désir que rien ne peut changer, ni fléchir, quand tout change? Le manque d'oubli est la même chose que le manqué à être, car être, ce n'est rien d'autre que d'oublier. L'amour de la vérité, c'est l'amour de cette faiblesse dont nous avons soulevé le voile, c'est l'amour de ceci que la vérité cache, et qui s'appelle la castration* (Lacan, 1991: 58).

of the Oedipus complex as a psychoanalytic tool. Lacan, however, is not calling for the complete abandonment of the Oedipus complex, but is implementing Freud's dream-analysis to uncover an underlying meaning to the Oedipus complex, as presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), that makes the important distinction between manifest- and latent dream content. For Lacan, Freud's depiction originates following the death of his own father, discussed in section 1.3 and section 2.4.1. This confronted Freud with the fallibility and temporality of his own father, which is exactly what Lacan believes Freud to be covering up. Hence, Freud introduces the depiction of the myth of the primal horde as a means of protecting the (frail, fallible, temporal) image of this father as an all-powerful entity, of which *Moses and Monotheism* is a variation. However, for Lacan, this is also the reason why Freud failed in his treatment of Dora and hysterics in general (§2.4.2.).

Therefore, Lacan's re-evaluation of the Oedipus complex shatters Freud's depiction of the myth of the primal horde and the murder of the all powerful father. Lacan, therefore, replaces the murder of the primal-horde father with the figure of the castrated master<sup>164</sup>. This leads to an entirely different discussion, namely, the *four discourses*<sup>165</sup> that consist of the master's discourse, the university discourse, the hysteric's discourse, and the analyst's discourse. The *four discourses* are placed in a central position to explain the fundamental structure of psychoanalysis, especially now that the Oedipus complex has been refuted and displaced. The (dead) father is subsequently replaced by the (castrated) master, and depicted in the master's discourse.

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<sup>164</sup> Van Haute and Geyskens (2010b) conclude the same, "De figuur van de (gecastreerde) meester vervangt zo de figuur van die (vermoorde) vader" (144).

<sup>165</sup> Lacan, 2007:11-26, 1991: 9-27.

## **Conclusion**

The Oedipus complex remains an interesting and intriguing aspect of psychoanalysis. The Oedipus complex remains highly prominent within psychoanalysis, but it is also mostly disregarded as impractical and highly disputed. Yet, despite a barrage of critique and criticism, the Oedipus complex remains an integral part of psychoanalysis and how psychoanalysis is commonly perceived today. This thesis has focused on two aspects: the historical development of the Oedipus complex in Freud's oeuvre, and Jacques Lacan's reaction to and reinterpretation thereof.

The first chapter illustrated Freud's approach to the Oedipus complex and its distinction from the myth of the primal horde, where both the Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde prove to be irreconcilable. In the Oedipus complex, the prohibition is always present, whereas in the myth of the primal horde, the prohibition follows the death of the father. Yet in both cases, the prohibition is set to maintain a forbidden object. In the Oedipus complex, the forbidden object is the mother, whereas in the myth of the primal horde, it is the father's enjoyment that is prohibited. The father's enjoyment is hedonistic, all-consuming, totalitarian, and threatening towards the sons. The father enjoys all the women and keeps them for himself. The sons band together, murder him, and divide his rule. Common belief would assume that the father's rule would end with his demise, yet Freud illustrated how this only entrenched his rule because of the guilt the sons experience after murdering the father. The death of the father serves only to entrench the prohibition, and consequently imbeds the prohibition into culture. The Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde are impossible to reconcile into a cohesive theoretical position, since both depictions treat the origin of prohibition differently. What the myth of the primal horde and the Oedipus complex do however have in common is that the Oedipus complex displays elements of the father of the primal horde - specifically the ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father, as well as identification with the father. Freud maintains a distinction between the Oedipus complex

and myth of the primal horde in his earlier works, that seems to collapse this distinction in his later writings. The Oedipus complex features in two important ways: firstly, to explain the transition from the phallic stage to the latent stage in terms of psychosexual development. Secondly, to explain inter-familial relations, for example in the Dora case study between Dora, her father, Herr K and Frau K<sup>166</sup>. However, it is in this second application that the Oedipus complex encounters its greatest resistance in so far as Dora's treatment was unsuccessful, failing in both clinical and practical approaches. However, what both the myth of the primal horde and the Oedipus complex have in common is the depiction of the father as all-powerful. It is Freud's overemphasis of the father figure that Lacan focuses, and hinges his entire argument, on.

The second chapter focuses on Lacan's reading of Freud's Oedipus complex and the myth of the primal horde, as depicted in Seminar 17, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). Lacan dismissed the Oedipus complex as unusable, called it Freud's dream and emphasized how the Oedipus complex fails to hold in the clinical setting. Lacan focused on Freud's depiction of the father as all-powerful, instead of completely dismissing the Oedipus complex. If the Oedipus complex is Freud's dream, Lacan suggests that it should be interpreted and treated as a dream. This re-evaluation of the Oedipus complex focuses on Freud's confrontation with the fallibility and temporality of his own father as illustrated in Freud's (1900) *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Lacan believes Freud is covering up this fallibility and temporality by introducing the depiction of this father as all-powerful. Lacan focuses on three texts to illustrate how this depiction of the father remains in Freud's work, starting with *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

There are two aspects that future research can focus on. The first being the four discourses, which Lacan discusses at greater length in Seminar 17, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007). The four

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<sup>166</sup> *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')* (1905a)

discourses take on a central position in Lacan's later works, and comprise of the Master's discourse, the Hysteric's discourse, the University discourse, and the Analyst's discourse. The four discourses are introduced, according to Grigg (2007:58), on the one hand to explain castration independently of the Oedipus complex, and on the other hand, to explain why Freud holds on to the Oedipus complex so strongly. This thesis has explained the second question - why Freud holds so strongly to the Oedipus complex - without reference to the four discourses. Yet, to explain the notion of castration without the Oedipus complex, as well as female sexuality, is at the centre of Lacan's Seminar 20, *Encore* (1975). The second aspect for future research focuses on this depiction of castration and sexuality from the perspective of the four discourses, already introduced in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (2007).

However, the focus of this thesis was predominately on Lacan's answer to the question of Freud's insistence on using the Oedipus complex and the strong prohibiting father, especially as this depiction of the father appears throughout Freud's oeuvre.



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